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THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION



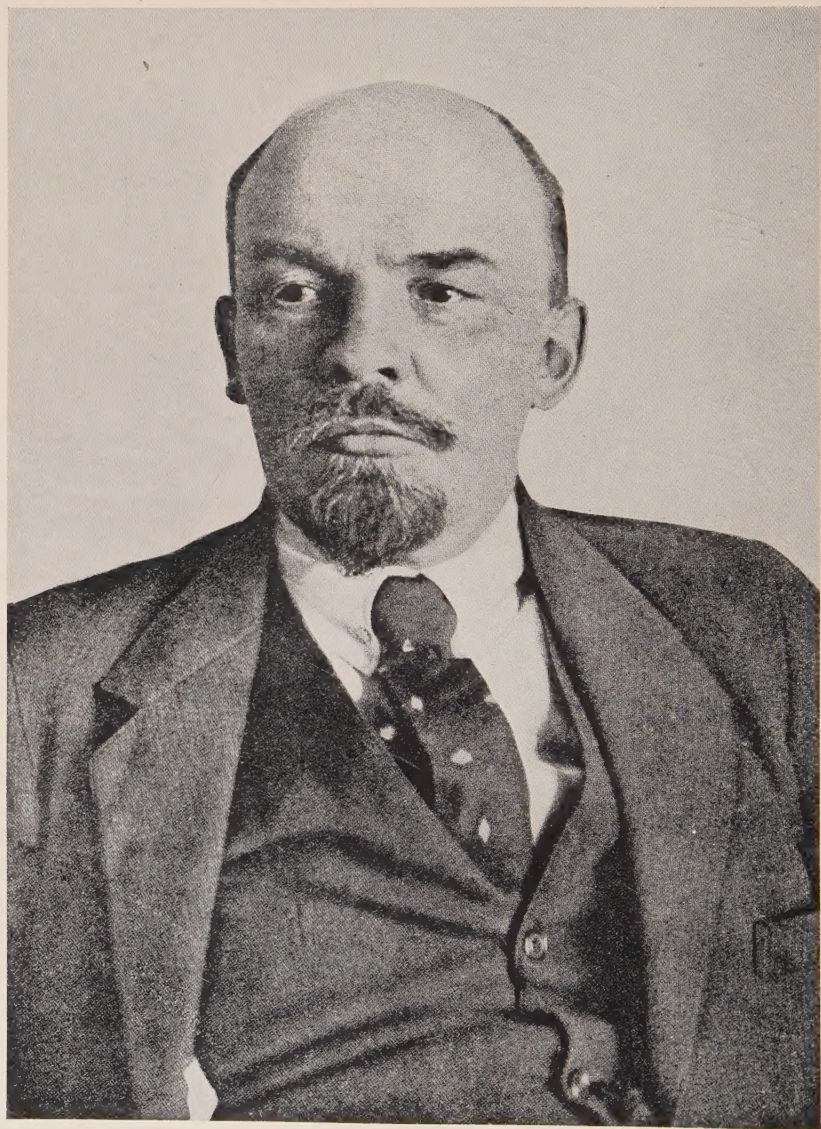
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LENIN.

Born April 23, 1870. Died January 21, 1924.

# THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

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BY  
LANCELOT LAWTON

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PREFACE

THE period of Russian history of which this book treats is that of the Bolshevik Revolution.

I believe that the world is deeply interested in the experiments that are taking place in Soviet Russia, and that there is a demand for a work which shall be a sober and impartial account of these experiments. It has been my endeavour to produce a work of this character.

I lived in Russia before the war and paid a prolonged visit to that country in 1924, when I collected much historical material, which has since been supplemented by the fruits of original research.

All particulars relating to specific questions have been brought up to date; amongst the sources of information which I consulted for this purpose were numerous official publications printed in Russia.

Strictly speaking, the Bolshevik Revolution has so far proceeded in two stages: (1) Militant Communism, which ended in economic cataclysm; (2) Nationalisation, which still survives. In judging of the latter, the reader must bear in mind that it is being applied under conditions which are peculiar to Russia, and totally different from those to be found in any Western country.

In the course of this work I have freely exploited the knowledge possessed by my wife, Lydia Alexandrovna. This knowledge covers a wide range of subjects, including a number of languages.

I should also like to mention that my last visit to Russia was made on behalf of *The Daily Chronicle*. From the articles which I subsequently wrote for that newspaper I have extracted material sufficient to make up about two and a half chapters; the remainder of the book is composed of entirely fresh material.

Since the following pages went to press, the proposal to amend the marriage laws of Soviet Russia has been

revived,\* and has been accepted by the Central Executive Committee, which is the final legislative authority. The new text, while emphasising that registration is desirable in the interests of the State and Society, declares that henceforth the registration of marriages shall be optional. In the event of a man and a woman living together without registration the fact of marriage would, if necessary, have to be legally established by one or more of the following proofs : mutual enjoyment of property, mutual financial support, mutual responsibility for the education of children, and documentary evidence in correspondence or otherwise, or the testimony of third parties.

One important alteration has been introduced into the divorce laws. The obligation of one party for the maintenance of another who may happen to be destitute after divorce, is limited to a year. In the past, many men frequently availed themselves of the easy divorce laws, but invariably neglected to support their former wives. Numerous instances occurred where, in order to secure the temporary help of a wife in the fields, peasants married at the beginning of the harvesting season and divorced when it was over. The new law, it is hoped, will ensure that a divorced woman receives at least one year's maintenance. It is also intended to defeat a type of designing woman who appeared, particularly in the villages, and made a practice of marrying for no other purpose than divorcing as a means of obtaining a share in her husband's property.

L. L.

*Knightsbridge,  
December, 1926.*

\* See p. 224.

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# THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

## CHAPTER I

### THE SPIRIT OF THE REVOLUTION

DURING my stay in Russia I visited amongst other places Yaroslavl on the Volga, one of the most picturesque old towns in Russia, with a history dating back to the eleventh century.

The interiors of the churches there are covered with masses of frescoes; nowhere in the world is so rich a display of beauty and colour to be seen.

In one of the churches I made the acquaintance of a young woman artist. I saw at a glance that she belonged to the new type of people created by the Revolution. The features of her powdered face were masculine, while her manner was confident.

"Have you seen the new art of the Revolution?" she said.

"Where?" I asked.

"The futurist and all that sort of thing in the Alexander III Museum in Leningrad."

I had hardly time to say that I had visited this museum before she became apologetic.

"Of course," she remarked, "the Revolution has not had time to produce great work—but it will do so. Only give it time; a little more time!"

I then questioned her as to her purpose in Yaroslavl.

"Oh," she said, "I'm in the employ of the Soviet. I'm here to study the old religious ikons, and to take copies of them. All the young revolutionary artists are now enthusiastic about this ancient religious art."

Some days later, in company with a typical Bolshevik, I visited an exhibition of ikons held in Moscow.

I intend to devote a separate chapter to the subject of art and the Revolution. But here, in passing, I should like



to speak of the fundamental qualities of Byzantine ikonography: its subtle harmonising of Hellenistic and Eastern influences, its cold, passionless austerity, its renunciation of all human feeling, its disdain of a common ideal, and frigid expression of high abstraction. Compare, for example, its Madonna with that of the Italian painters, and at once the difference will be seen, the one not of this world, severe, remote, and resigned, the other a woman of the people, homely, simple, sentimental. The former is apt to frighten us with the mad expression of her eyes, and her inhuman aspect generally. Her very aspect is rebuke.

We looked at a painting of Christ—the Bolshevik and I.

“What do you think of it?” I asked.

“I don’t understand it. The faces of all these images look the same to me . . . monotonous . . . no variety . . . uncompromising—not human.”

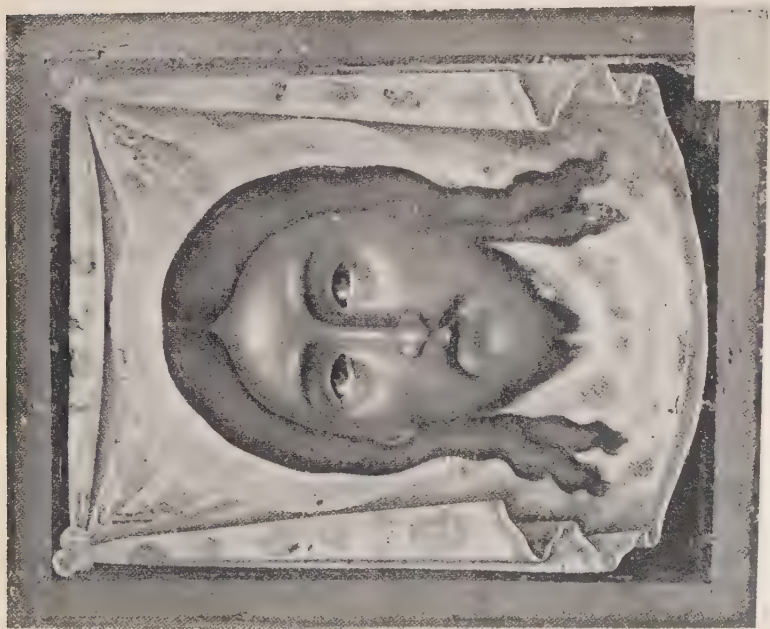
It was on the tip of my tongue to say: “How strange—the same is said of you Bolsheviks!”

I could not help thinking of what the young woman had told me in Yaroslavl concerning the Revolution’s interest in the ancient religious art of Russia.

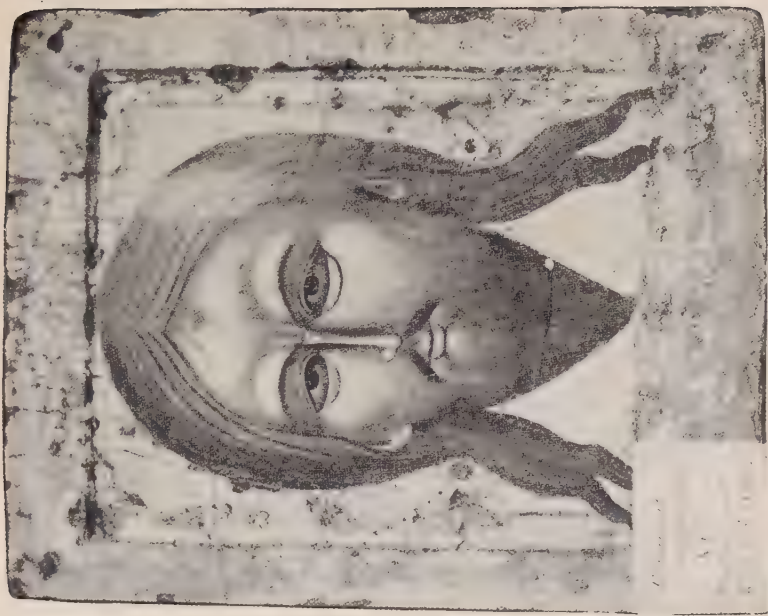
The face of the ikon upon which we were looking, like those of most ikons which I had seen, was austere and resigned. The austerity expressed fanatical mastery of will—resignation, complete realisation, worldly disillusionment. Here, I felt, was some explanation of what many have chosen to call by that hateful phrase “the enigma of Russia.”

The Orthodox Faith was the Faith of the peasant masses, the people of Russia. And in no other faith has the austere spirit of Early Christianity survived to the same extent. It was not an ordinary religious faith, the Orthodox Faith, not a religion as we understand the word, but faith—simply faith, and as such it entered into the very marrow of the people’s bones. The priests and the churches and the ritual did not count for much; what mattered was faith, with all its superstitions and wonders.

Here is undeniably the source of the immense power of the Orthodox religion—a power which not even the



RUSSIAN IKON, NOVGOROD SCHOOL, 1674.  
By the famous painter, Simon Oushakov.



RUSSIAN IKON, NOVGOROD SCHOOL, 15TH CENTURY.



corruption of some of its priests could diminish. Yet despite its precious austerity, it was characterised by an excess of resignation; its kingdom was not of this world. The same, it may be said, is true of all religions. But I cannot help thinking that the Orthodox religion takes itself much more seriously than do others.

As an institution, the Church, like most Churches, may have managed to accommodate itself conveniently to life, but its followers had and still have a primitive and quite fanatical conception of religion.

Only in Russia do we find saints and hermits such as we read about in holy stories and legends, only in Russia does the Bible come to life again in everyday existence. Perhaps the explanation is that Russia is still in the Middle Ages; Western Europe has lived over its religious realism—and Faith.

Tolstoy, "speaking impartially," insisted that the Russian people were perhaps the most Christian of all peoples in their moral character. "It is partly to be explained," he said, "by the fact that the Gospels have been read by the Russian people for nine hundred years." And he added: "Catholics don't know the Gospels even now, and other races came to know the Gospel only after the Reformation." Thus, according to Tolstoy, the Russian people, so backward in what we call civilisation, are the most learned of all peoples in the teachings of Christianity. Tolstoy wrote long before the Revolution, but what he said is not, I think, materially affected by the terrible events that have since occurred. As I have already said, Christianity as it was understood in Russia had too much resignation in it. This was reflected in the passivity of the national character; a passivity that was no doubt encouraged to a large extent by the anæsthesia of a beautiful religious ritual. There is something to be said for the Bolshevik assertion that "Religion is opium for the people." But it does not explain everything. There remained the austerity of Russian religion, an austerity which has caused people in Russia to inflict upon themselves (and often upon others) the most terrible sacrifices and sufferings imaginable. For the Orthodox Faith is the Faith of self-torture, of the



Garden of Gethsemane, and of the fast of forty days and forty nights.

To account for the character of the Russian people, it is not enough to say, as Tolstoy said, that they know more of the sources of Christianity, and of the Gospels, than any other people. We must not forget that Russia emerged late from paganism, and that her geographical situation, lying between East and West, always caused her much perplexity of spirit. When we associate all these facts, we get some clue to the extraordinary contradictions of the Russian character, its variability of moods, its indolence and intensity, its susceptibility to new impressions, its capacity to rise to great heights and to fall to the lowest depths.

The face of the ikon tells us everything about the Russian ; for it is the creation of an art that is struggling to unite Heaven and Earth, and to harmonise two souls, the Eastern and Western, the expression of pagan severity (or perhaps sincerity) that is shining through the sorrowful mists of Christian resignation. From whence then, it may be asked, comes the Revolution, with all its blood and filth ? From the triumph of austerity in the struggle against resignation.

Resignation was the lot of the peasants. How could it be otherwise ? The peasants were isolated in remote sleepy villages, and although their Church sinfully compromised herself with the State, they themselves had nothing whatever to do with politics—all that was required of them was meek submissiveness to authority. Thus no need ever arose for them to adjust their consciences to the demands of nationalism (and patriotism), and although the consequences were bad in many ways, at least some naïve truths of Christianity were preserved. But the more intelligent and restless elements could not remain content with so mild a philosophy ; nor could they accept that political extinction which was imposed upon the educated class as rigorously as upon the peasant masses.

Tolstoy sounded the revolt against Church and State when he preached the doctrine of non-resistance to evil. At first it might seem that such a doctrine accorded well with the passive side of the moujik's character. But Tolstoy had not in mind indolent non-resistance ; what he

preached was full realising non-resistance even to the point of death itself, a doctrine which, if followed seriously, would prove to be the most powerful form of resistance imaginable. Yet always the possibility was there that it might call for self-annihilation; thus it was essentially anarchistic and essentially eastern in its ultimate suicidal fatalism. Nevertheless, it was an abandonment of resignation, an attempt to arouse the Russian masses to positive action, which, carried to its logical extreme, reflected the austerity on the face of the ikon.

Even so profound an Orthodox believer as Dostoevsky had seen the need for an active Faith. In "The Brothers Karamazov," he makes the Elder, Father Zossima, send the youth, Alyosha, into the world to work among the people with these words: "Love God's people. Because we have come here and shut ourselves within these walls [of the Monastery] we are no holier than those outside, but from the very fact of coming here each of us has confessed to himself that he is worse than others, than all men on earth!"

Tolstoy declared rejection of authority, Dostoevsky obedience to authority. Tolstoy was the apostle of spiritual anarchy, Dostoevsky the high priest of Orthodox Autocracy.

Each thinker opposed a blank wall to that section of the community which, in spite of its little learning, has arrogated to itself the label of intelligentsia and has cherished the belief that it could find a political solution for life. This section held that Tolstoy's ideas amounted to rejection without affirmation and as such were bound to take one of two forms, either inactive and abstract as witnessed in the life of Tolstoy himself, or the senseless destruction of all social order. On the other hand, the beliefs of Dostoevsky were regarded as affirmation without rejection. And they too were looked upon as inactive abstraction, but of a kind that led nowhere except to hopeless reaction and the permanence of Orthodox Tsardom.

Between these two extremes there was need for something. What that something was to be no one was able clearly to perceive. Meanwhile, the blank was filled by the word "Revolution," which expressed discontent without indicating action. After all, what did it matter in those

days? The main thing was to destroy—to pull down—to be active. And this desire to destroy—was it not consistent with Russian history and tradition?

I will not weary the reader with a detailed examination of the views held by the various revolutionary groups. None of them, except perhaps the Bolsheviks (and not all of these), appeared to have a clear idea of what it wanted. Only on one point were the revolutionaries at all definite, and that was on the imperative need to rid the country of the Imperial Autocracy. Yet all of them were inspired by certain identical ideas—fixed ideas—and in spite of their political disputations a marvellous uniformity in the state of their minds was discernible. To begin with, they were impatient for action; the Imperial Government allowed them no outlet for social work. To them, the resignation on the face of the ikon was intolerable. What they wanted, and what they felt they could create, was the Kingdom of God on Earth. They could not wait for Heaven in the next world, as promised by the Orthodox Faith. It was not an accidental circumstance that this impatience for action was also present in the minds of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, in the call of the one for non-resistance to evil, in the advice of the other to Alyosha to forsake the cloister and labour among his fellow-men. But there was this profound difference, that whereas these thinkers put their faith in Christ, the revolutionary intelligentsia denied Him. In spite of their professed atheism, the mysticism of the Russian nature revealed itself in the passionate desire of the best of the revolutionaries for justice, and in the belief that it was possible to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. On that account it has been said of them that they were more Christian than the Christians, for they aimed at a social order to be founded on the eternal truth of the Gospels. They demanded that the austerity on the face of the ikon should be translated into deeds.

Merezhkovsky wrote as far back as 1908: "What is happening now in Russia is a dangerous game, not only for Russians, but for all Europeans. You Europeans look intently upon us. You follow the Russian Revolution with anxiety but not closely enough. What is happening among

us is more terrible than it seems to you. We are burning—there is no doubt about it—but shall we burn alone? Shall we not set you on fire—about this there is some doubt. The exterior events of our turmoil are known to Europe, but not its interior sense. Europe sees the moving body, but not the soul of the Russian Revolution. The soul of the Russian people and the Russian Revolution remains for Europe an eternal enigma. . . . What you have got we have got, but on the reverse side. We are you on the reverse side. What Kant would call your phenomenon is our transcendentalism. Nietzsche would say you are Apollo, we are Dionysius. The measure of your genius is limited, ours is limitless. . . . You preserve the soul, we search for something for which we can lose it. You have your present City, and we are searching for the coming City. You, on the last edge of your liberty, remain imperial, and we, in the interior of our slavery, are rebels and anarchists. For you politics are knowledge, but for us they are religion. In reason and feeling very often we go to the absolute rejection and in the deeper interior of our will we are mystics. . . . To understand this it is not enough to read about it; it is necessary to live through us. It is difficult and terrible, more terrible than you think. We are your danger. We are the fang of Satan-in-God driven into your flesh. . . . Unless we understand its mystic meaning the last sense of the Russian Revolution will remain incomprehensible to us. Revolution is religion. All deeds of the devil—falsehoods and the killing of men—are covered by the name of God. For the revolutionary, ordinary religion is reaction. The Russian Revolution is not only political but religious; that is what it is difficult for a European to understand, for whom religion itself was long ago a question of politics. You judge by yourselves. It seems to you that we are going through the natural illness of growth like all European peoples. Let them sow their wild oats, say you, and then they will reject Socialism and Anarchism and will be satisfied with the old constitutional shops of the bourgeois democratic middle way. It has been so everywhere and it will be so with you. Probably it would be so if we had not been the reverse of you, if we



had not that transcendentalism which makes us break our heads against the wall. . . . The Russian Revolution will not stop at a Constitutional Monarchy or at any of these old Parliamentary shops. . . . The Russian Revolution is universal. When you Europeans will understand this you will rush to put out the fire; but be on your guard. You will not put us out, but we will set you on fire.\* Socialism without the State is a new religious realisation and activity, new religious unity of individual and society—limitless freedom and limitless love. Real powerlessness is real God power. These words are enigmatic, but let them remain so. Not science, not philosophy, but only religion can answer the last requirements of freedom. We address ourselves not to bourgeois European societies, but only to separate individuals possessed of the highest universal culture who realise, with Nietzsche, that the State is the coldest of all monsters. We believe that sooner or later we shall reach the masses, and that this immense voice of the Russian Revolution will sound over European cemeteries the trumpet of the Archangel, announcing terrible judgment and resurrection of the dead."

Merezhkovsky regarded Western civilisation as a sleeping princess in a glass coffin and had a burning faith in the universal mission of the Russian Revolution. His views were an echo of those held in the remote past. Publicists of the sixteenth century preached that Russia would fulfil a high destiny in the world, and that two Romes having fallen, "the third one, our Moscow, yet standeth, and a fourth one there shall never be."

And towards the end of the seventeenth century a school of thought developed, the adherents of which ultimately became known as Slavophiles. Russia, the Slavophiles said, is not the teacher, nor the satellite, nor even the rival, of Europe: she is, rather, its successor. Russia and Europe are two contiguous cosmopolitan-historical stages, two successive phases, in the cultural growth of humanity. Sown with monuments, Western Europe is a vast burying-ground where, sleeping under stately marble memorials,

\* Lenin said later that society without the State was the ultimate goal of Revolution.

there lie the great dead who are gone; whereas Russia of the forest and the steppe is a cradle wherein the world's future lies uneasily tossing and impotently weeping. Europe has nearly lived her life, whereas Russia is only *beginning* to live hers; and, since she is fated to live when Europe has altogether passed away, she ought to be able to live *without* Europe—to live by her own wits, by her own principles, and with them eventually to supplant the outworn principles of European life, and to flood the world with a new light. And later thinkers so wide apart in their views as Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Herzen, and Bakunin all had visions of universal revolution, which would come about because of the exploitation of the weak by the strong—in other words, would take the form of proletarian revolt in all lands. Dostoevsky wrote: "Europe is on the verge of a general, universal and terrible catastrophe." And then he made use of the expression: "The proletarian is in the street," asking the question: "Do you think he will wait and starve in patience as he used to do?" To which he replied: "He will hurl himself on Europe, and all the old things will crumble for ever."

And Tolstoy wrote: "I think that at present—at this very time—the life of the Christian nations is near the limit dividing the old epoch which is ending from the new which is beginning; I think that now at this very time, a great revolution has begun which, for almost two thousand years, has been preparing in all Christendom, a revolution which consists in the substitution of false Christianity, and the consequent power of one portion of mankind and the slavery of another, by true Christianity, and the consequent recognition of that equality and liberty which is natural to all rational beings. The external symptoms of this I see in the strenuous struggle between classes in all nations, in the cold cruelty of the wealthy, the exasperation and despair of the poor, the insane, ever-increasing armaments of all states against each other, the spread of the unrealisable teaching of Socialism, dreadful in its despotism and wonderful in its superficiality, in the futility and stupidity of the idle discussions and examinations upheld as a most important activity called science, in the morbid depravity

and emptiness of art in all its manifestations, and, above all, not only in the absence of any religion in the leading spheres, but in the deliberate negation of all religion, and by the substitution of the legality of the oppression of the weak by the strong and therefore in the complete absence of any guiding principles in life."

Thus we get certain distinguishing threads running through all Russian thought, revolutionary and otherwise: belief in the imminence of universal upheaval and in the realisation of the Kingdom of God on earth; belief that the West is decadent and on the edge of a cataclysm; and belief that the foundation of the new City will be laid by Russians and in Russia. Here we can trace the influence of the fanaticism on the face of the ikon, the ikon which, centuries ago, had come out of Byzantium, and not only breathed unity of paganism and Christianity, but bore promise of a unity between East and West, a promise that came near to fulfilment in the days of Russia's ancient culture, the days when her art reached its zenith and when her republican forms of government had democratic ideals.

In Russia, this fanaticism found favourable ground: a land of wide, lonely spaces branded with hopelessness, fit only to brood in. No wonder the Russian nature alternated between the lethargy of despair and the enthusiasm of the seer. No wonder it could take no other form than extremism; it would have been inexplicable had it been otherwise. It would be just as impossible to convince the average Russian that he ought to have acted differently as it would be to annihilate the ages-long influences that made him what he was. The face of the ikon has cast its spell over him; and he will go whither it drives him. Whether he will succeed or not in bringing about a union between paganism and Christianity, and East and West, is another matter. Perhaps his primitive restlessness is a gift of God to re-vitalise a tired world. Perhaps we have need of someone who has faith in something.

The Bolsheviks offer faith in reason as a substitute for faith in God. There is nothing new in what they preach; it has been tried before in history and has failed. But Bolshevism is not the last word that will come out of Russia.

## CHAPTER II

### THE IDEAS OF THE REVOLUTION

THE Revolution destroyed the Imperial Autocracy and exposed an unbridgeable chasm in the ranks of the intelligent classes. On the one side stood various groups or parties, who, despite their different labels, were evident Liberals; on the other the Bolsheviks, who might best be described as Socialists in earnest.

Each had taken something from the expression which had come into the face of the Russian ikon as a consequence of centuries of introspection, the Liberals resignation or possibly feebleness, the Bolsheviks austerity and fanaticism. I know that both will protest that they are pagans and have nothing to do with ikons. To that I reply that even Lenin himself once said that Christianity, when it attained to the position of a state religion, had forgotten the *naïveté* of primitive Christianity *with its revolutionary democratic spirit*.

To assert, as Lenin did, that real Christianity has a revolutionary aim is not extravagant. But there is the other view of Christianity, namely, that it is not to be attained in a day. Such a view was held by Liberals in Russia; and it too largely influenced the compromise of Church with State. But even so, as we have seen, the faith as preached by the Orthodox Fathers was nearer to primitive Christianity than that of any other Church. If the religion of the priests had this superiority, that of the masses was even more favoured. For, as I have already said, the masses were not allowed to have any responsibility for the State; and thus their conception of Christianity remained primitive, realistic and sincere. Is it possible that here we have the explanation of Russian anarchy, of the revolutionary spirit that dwelt in Lenin?

Nothing is, I think, more remarkable than this fact, that, nine years after the Revolution, the character and aims of



Bolshevism should be understood by so few people in the West. It is, as I say, a remarkable fact, but it is not one about which there need be any mystery. The truth has been either distorted or wholly obscured by torrents of senseless propaganda. For this the blame must be equally apportioned. The Bolsheviks, on their side, represented the new order in Russia as something near to perfection, while their opponents everywhere spoke of it as the apotheosis of all that was dark and evil—as Hell on earth. When at last doubts began to creep in, when many people began to feel that each version was fantastic, a new legend spread, the legend that so complex was the Russian problem that truth concerning it was not discoverable.

Nothing could be more absurd; for a wealth of authentic documents exist concerning the Revolution and the ideas that led up to it, from which we are able to extract many historical facts. These facts, if used by anyone who has knowledge of the psychology of the Russian masses, afford abundant material for honest narrative. Perhaps the best method for the presentation of such a narrative is to first clear the ground of misrepresentation and then to construct an account of conditions as they are to be found in the Russia of to-day.

The chief thing to be noted is that when abroad the Bolsheviks are restrained in their language; indeed, if we judged them from what they say on some occasions we might almost imagine that they were harmless social reformers to whom all men were as brothers. But in their own country they adopt a different method. There, they are fiery revolutionaries, and their speeches and articles are of the violent order.

This dual rôle of the Bolsheviks is not difficult to explain. As revolutionaries who desire to maintain themselves in power, they have to make a demagogic appeal to their own masses. But as statesmen who wish to be received by the rest of the world (and to negotiate credits) they strive to demonstrate that they are sober-minded, and that it is possible to get on with them. But because they are driven into this tactical position, we ought not to allow ourselves to be taken in. The Bolshevism we must study is the

Bolshevism that is frank and not apologetic. For the true Bolshevik is a frantically sincere man who despises sentiment; he is to some extent a nihilist, and always a realist.

There are, of course, many Bolsheviks who have no conviction, many who belong to the Party just because it holds power. But the genuine Bolshevik, the dominant mind in the Party, is a man who will stop at nothing, who is ready to break the most intimate human tie or commit any deed in the calendar of sin for the furtherance of his political aims. A Bolshevik leader once complained to Lenin of a "comrade" who had married a rich old woman in order that he might extract money from her for party purposes. "You would not do such a thing, nor would I," said Lenin. "But," he added, "such men are useful and necessary to us." And once in Paris I was present at a quarrel between a well-known Bolshevik and a Social Revolutionary, the cause of which was the protest of the latter against the Bolshevik practice of making use of young women to procure money from wealthy men.

It is not surprising that the appearance of the Bolshevik in an emotional world that cannot make up its mind about anything should be terrifying. But the Bolshevik of whom I have spoken is the Bolshevik with whom we have to reckon, not the Bolshevik who comes as an Ambassador to us and says smooth things. If we are to understand him rightly we must find out what he is really thinking and what he hopes to accomplish. And this brings us back once more to the question of propaganda. For we must disregard the ingratiating talk of the Bolshevik emissary, and likewise the wild criticisms of his enemies; only then shall we see him as he is.

Let us begin at the beginning. The opponents of Bolshevism said that its purpose was to destroy—to destroy everything. Of course this accusation, on the face of it, was ridiculous. No set of men, however criminal or insane, consciously aims at annihilation. What the opponents of Bolshevism meant was that it could have no other end save destruction. But many of them are still reluctant to modify their condemnation even to this extent, for to do

so would involve the admission that the Bolsheviks, though lunatics, had sincerity.

What have the Bolsheviks themselves to say on the point? They say quite frankly: "Yes, we were out to destroy." And they insist that such destruction was not to be an accidental consequence, but the deliberate aim of revolution. Listen to what Lenin said: \* "The working classes must shatter, break, blow up the whole state machine." Elsewhere he told us that not one stone was to be left standing upon another; and he insisted all along that the problem was not one of perfecting the machinery of the State, but of annihilating it.

He was no less frank in stating his reasons for wishing to accomplish the complete destruction of the State. To begin with, he adopted Engels' definition of the State as a force arising from Society but placing itself above it, and which gradually separates itself from it. Then, continuing his agreement with Engels, he held the State to be an organisation of class domination, the machinery for the repression of one class by another. The order which it maintained in the community merely perpetuated repression, inasmuch as it moderated the collisions between classes. Therefore it must be destroyed before the proletariat could come into its own. Lenin scorned the claim that the order established by the State was a reconciliation of the classes; he could see in it only oppression, the oppression of one class by another.

Having given us his conception of the State, he next answered the question: "Of what does the State consist?" The State, he said, was composed mainly of instruments of force, of special bodies of armed men (soldiers and police), who had prisons at their command, and who had become divorced from Society and stood above it. To enable these instruments to function properly, a privileged bureaucracy had to be created. For universal suffrage he had nothing but ridicule; it was, he said, no more than a means of "universal domination."

\* Lenin's ideas were set forth in a pamphlet entitled, "The State and Revolution," published in 1917, on the eve of the Bolshevik seizure of power.

The immediate purpose of the Revolution, then, was the destruction of the State, or, to put it more plainly, the army, police, and bureaucracy of which the Bolsheviki believed the State to be composed. It followed that any individuals who actively upheld the State were to suffer a like fate. The whole capitalist structure of Society was, in short, to be wiped out. Thus, in one leap the Revolution tried to go beyond the attainment of any previous revolution in history; it sought to accomplish, not merely political, but also economic changes of a profound nature, and to deal a final blow at what had always been regarded as inseparable from human nature itself, the desire for private property and individual enterprise.

Can it be wondered at that there were atrocities, and that these atrocities were not confined to one side? People have said that the stories of atrocities were exaggerated. I do not believe it. Perhaps individual cases were exaggerated; but I should imagine that for every one which was over-stated others occurred which were minimised; the sum total of suffering was appalling and unprecedented. The primitive nature of the Russian masses has but little regard for human life, and when aroused to fits of fury it is capable of diabolical cruelty. It is then that we are reminded of the fanaticism on the face of the ikon, of how it came to be so terribly misunderstood.

Nothing illustrates more vividly the spirit in which preparations were made for the Revolution than an incident concerning Lenin which Zinoviev related in a speech delivered in 1918. Some simple Petrograd workmen came to him and said: "We want to engage in serious legislative work; we want to consult you about the budget, about such and such a bill, about certain amendments to certain bills introduced by the Cadets."

Lenin laughed heartily.

"What is the matter?" asked the members of the deputation, feeling abashed.

"My dear men," he answered, "what do you want a budget, an amendment, a bill for? You are workmen, and the Duma exists for the ruling classes. You just step forward and tell all Russia in simple language about the



life and toil of the working classes. Describe the horrors of capitalist rule, summon the workers to make a revolution, and fling into the face of the reactionary Duma that its members are scoundrels and exploiters. Tell them: "You had better introduce a bill stating that in three years' time we shall take you all, landlords and capitalists, and hang you on lamp-posts. That would be a real bill."

Again and again we find Lenin insisting upon the need for violent revolution in all capitalist States; "Barbarism must be met with barbarism," was his favourite motto. His nearest colleagues described him as "a warrior from tip to toe." When defending themselves from the accusation of barbarity, the Bolsheviks compare themselves with the Jacobins, and the position of Russia with that of the French Revolution when attacked on all sides by hostile States. And they point to the fact that in their time the Jacobins were regarded as the personification of evil.

A precedent even more freely cited in Moscow is that of the Commune; in fact, the Revolution in Russia closely adhered to the Paris insurrection of 1871, more especially in regard to its terroristic methods, the taking of hostages and the issue of intimidatory decrees. Terrorism was a favourite theme of Trotsky, who, because he now desires what is called democratisation in the Communist Party, must not be mistaken for a moderate. He is the author of a book the title of which is "The Defence of Terrorism," in which the following passage occurs:

"The man who repudiates terrorism in principle—*i.e.* repudiates measures of suppression and intimidation towards determined and armed counter-revolution—must reject all idea of the political supremacy of the working class and its revolutionary dictatorship. The man who repudiates the dictatorship of the proletariat repudiates the Socialist Revolution and digs the grave of Socialism. . . . The question of the form of repression, or of its degree, is not one of principle. It is a question of expediency. . . . The Revolution works in the same way as war; it kills individuals and intimidates thousands . . . there is no way of breaking the class will of the enemy except by the systematic and energetic use of violence."



In face of the frankness of Lenin and Trotsky, it would be a waste of time to seek to establish the truth or otherwise of the stories circulated as to atrocities. How could merciful methods possibly be expected from a party whose purpose it was to first "blow up and shatter" the State in Russia and then bring about revolution of a similar kind throughout the rest of the world, a party whose belief it was that politics must consist in violence and that without violence no progress is possible?

The Bolsheviks endeavour to justify their conduct by reference to the White Terror and to various historical examples—notably the horrors perpetrated in the American Civil War. It is true that the White Terror, though less extensive, was not less severe than the Red Terror; indeed, when in Russia recently, I met numerous individuals who said that the *régime* of the Soviet was preferable to that of the debauched hordes who came in the disguise of deliverers. It is true also that all revolutions are accompanied by fiendish cruelties on both sides; and in Russia, where mass civilisation is retarded, an upheaval could not be otherwise than a massacre. At the same time, it is beyond question that the Bolsheviks exploited the primitive instincts of the mob to secure their power.

As we have seen, they deliberately incited the masses to violence. Their motive may have been to annihilate the existing State and set up a Utopia in its place. But many people understood their speeches in a quite different sense. To these, the Revolution meant nothing more than sanction to plunder and, if needs be, to murder, to indulge in personal vengeance and to abandon all moral restraints. Had the Bolsheviks sought to impose discipline at such a moment they themselves would have been swept away. But their main concern was, not to save others, but to save themselves, to preserve their own power at all hazards. For a while mob violence suited their destructive ends; soon they substituted for it a terror of their own. This terror has been kept up ever since, a circumstance which admits of only one of two conclusions: either the Revolution is still in being, or Bolshevism without barbarism is not possible.

The State destroyed, what is to come next? A dictatorship of the proletariat; or, as the Bolshevik leaders sometimes put it, a dictatorship of the vanguard of the proletariat—that is to say, of the Bolshevik Party. Later, I will subject to analysis the claim of the Bolsheviks that the system in Russia is a dictatorship of the proletarian vanguard. For the moment my purpose is to present an impartial account of their ideas. It is not denied by them that the existing rule in Russia is a transition stage from Capitalism to Communism. Destruction having been accomplished, suppression continues. “It is clear,” wrote Lenin, “that where there is suppression there must also be violence; and there cannot be liberty or democracy.” But in the same paragraph he argued that the Bolshevik State, while restricting the liberty of the rich, is in reality an immense expansion of democracy—“for it is,” he said, “the beginning of democracy for the poor.”

“If we look more closely into the mechanism of capitalist democracy everywhere,” he continues, “in the so-called petty details of the suffrage, in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of public meeting [public buildings are not for the poor], in the purely capitalist organisation of the daily press—on all sides we shall see restriction upon restriction of democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions and obstacles for the poor seem slight—especially in the eyes of one who himself has never known want, and has never lived in close contact with the oppressed classes in their herd life, and nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths, of the bourgeois publicists and politicians are of this class. But in their sum these restrictions exclude and thrust out the poor from politics and from an active share in democracy. Marx splendidly grasped the essence of capitalist democracy when, in his analysis of the experience of the Commune, he said that ‘the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class are to represent them in Parliament.’”

The first stage of communist society is the stage of suppression, which both Marx and Lenin called Socialism.

The Capitalist State has been destroyed, but the new order having just emerged from the womb of the old, bourgeois excesses and anomalies survive. The means of production are converted into common property, and in theory the principle is supposed to be realised, that "He who does not work neither shall he eat"; in theory also everyone receives for an equal quantity of labour an equal share of products. So far it may be said progress is being made towards Communism. But in reality no two individuals have equal capacity for work; hence to reward everyone with an equal share of products would be manifestly unjust. Lenin admitted this; but declared that it was an inevitable survival of bourgeois law which sanctifies actual inequality. "The State," he said, "is therefore not quite dead yet, but it is 'withering away' in so far as there are no longer any capitalists, any classes, and, consequently, any class to suppress. Thus Socialism, the first stage of Communism, will have been created."

Next Lenin proceeded to give us a precise definition of Socialism: the conversion of the means of production into common property; the equal division of the pool of products. But he went farther. He told us how this was to become administratively possible. All the citizens were to be transformed into the hired employés of the State, the State being the "armed workers"; in other words, the citizens were to become the workers and employés of one national state syndicate, the whole of society one office and one factory with equal work and equal pay. At the time he wrote, Lenin contemplated that there would be few difficulties of organisation; everything was ready for the great transition and would proceed smoothly, so he said.

Capitalism had drilled the people into working conscientiously; all that was necessary thenceforth was that the armed proletariat should stand over them and see that discipline was kept up. From that moment the whole business would go with a perfection of rhythm. Listen to this: "It simply resolves itself into a question of all working to an equal extent, of all carrying out regularly the measure of work apportioned to them, and of all receiving equal pay. The bookkeeping and control necessary for this have been

simplified by capitalism to the utmost, till they have become the extraordinarily simple operations of watching, recording and issuing receipts within the reach of anybody who can read and write and knows the first four arithmetical rules."

Thus the functions of the State were to be so simplified under proletarian rule that every literate person would be able to perform them for the usual working-man's wages, a circumstance that would cheapen government service and deprive it of all glamour.

"When the majority of the citizens," says Lenin, "themselves begin everywhere to keep such accounts and maintain such control over the capitalists now converted into employés and over the intellectual gentry who still retain capitalist habits, this control will indeed become universal, pervading, rational, it will be ubiquitous, and there will be no way of escaping it." At the same time, we are warned that "the escape from such general registration and control will inevitably become so increasingly difficult, so much the exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are very practical people, not sentimental intellectuals, and they will scarcely allow anyone to trifle with them), that very soon the necessity of observing the simple fundamental rules of any social life will become a habit."

And Bukharin, one of Lenin's closest disciples, wrote: \* "We Communists want a workers' government, which we must have provisionally, until the working-class has completely defeated its opponents, thoroughly drilled the whole of the bourgeoisie, knocked the conceit out of it and deprived it of the last shred of hope of ever regaining power."

And what after that? The door (said Lenin) will be opened wide for the "banishment [in the words of Engels] of the whole state machine to the museum of antiquities, side by side with the spinning wheel and the bronze axe."

But how are we to know when this withering away, this banishment, is complete? When the formula will be realised: From each according to his ability, to each

\* "The A B C of Communism," by N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, 1924.

according to his needs; when there will be no necessity for any exact calculation by society of products to be distributed to its members, for each will take freely according to his needs.

When that time comes, all antagonism between brain and manual labour will be abolished, and work, of whatsoever kind it may be, will be transformed simply into a "first necessity of life."



## CHAPTER III

### THE UNIVERSAL AIMS OF THE REVOLUTION

IN the preceding chapter I have spoken of the resemblance of the Bolshevik Revolution to the Paris Commune. Not only were the methods of terrorism the same in both instances, but there were strong points of similarity between the origins as well as the purposes of both insurrections.

The Paris Commune followed upon a defeat in war. So did the Bolshevik Revolution. The Paris Commune was supported by the Internationale (of which Karl Marx was one of the secretaries), the aim of which was to overthrow the middle classes and the capitalist order, and establish proletarian governments throughout all the countries of the world.

A fundamental condition of the Bolshevik creed is that revolution should be universal; the purpose aimed at is the setting up of a union of dictatorships throughout the world. This idea dominates all activities of the Bolsheviks; unless it be realised, they would regard the Revolution in Russia as of no great consequence. To them power in Russia is merely a means to an end, the end being the universal overthrow of the capitalist system. To ask them to cease working for this end, to abandon conspiracy and propaganda, is to invite them to give up being what they are and have been nearly all their lives, men who believe that they are appointed by destiny to take the leadership in disciplining all mankind to the ways of Communism.

Now and then they may compromise a little, may even go so far as to give undertakings, but these undertakings they would not fulfil, if it should suit their purpose to do otherwise. For they boast that they are as hard as steel, and as soft as silk; it was not for nothing that allusion was made to the complex curve of Lenin's straight line. When he was advocating a change from Militant Communism to State

Capitalism, he counselled his supporters to "manœuvre, temporise and compromise" all, as he said, with a view to preserving the Soviet Power while the Revolution was maturing in other countries. And again and again he spoke of the imperative need for what he called zig-zags. At that time, "Comrades of the Left" were bitterly disappointed with him, and set up a strong opposition to his moderating proposals. But he poured ridicule upon them for their childish enthusiasms and scorned their anarchism and enthusiasm as the "Nirvana of bourgeois inactivity."

Lenin advocated circumspection, but not the abandonment of the offensive against world capitalism. Circumspection was necessary, he said, because Russia was a backward country. "In Western Europe," he urged, "it will be quite different; *there* it is much more difficult to begin, but it will be much easier to go on."

Of the possibilities of revolution in Great Britain he remained optimistic to the end. His confidence was largely based upon the topheaviness of our population, four-fifths of which he noted were industrial and commercial, while only one-fifth was agricultural. Again and again he urged British Communists to penetrate into "the humbler taverns," unions, societies and chance gatherings of the people, and talk to them in homely fashion. Likewise he repeatedly emphasised the need for revolutionary propaganda, agitation and organisation in the army and among the nationalities oppressed and deprived of equal rights within the British Empire. Here, he said, the work must be carried on, not in a reformist, but in a revolutionary manner.\* "For all those spheres of public life," he added, "are especially filled with inflammable material and create many causes for conflicts, crises, enhancements of the class struggle." We get a characteristic revelation of his mind in a passage where he contemptuously alludes to those revolutionaries who cannot co-ordinate illegal forms of the struggle with legal ones as "poor revolutionaries."

To gain enlightenment as to the nature of these "illegal forms," we must turn to the theses of the Executive Council of the Communist International (Second Congress), in which

\* "Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder," by V. Lenin, 1920.

it is laid down that: "In all countries where in consequence of martial law or exceptional laws the Communists are unable to carry on their work lawfully, a combination of lawful and illegal work is absolutely necessary. The class struggle in almost all the countries of Europe and America is entering upon the phase of civil war. Under such conditions, the Communists cannot have any confidence in bourgeois laws. They are bound to create everywhere a parallel illegal apparatus, which at the decisive moment may help the Party to accomplish its duty to the Revolution. . . . An insistent systematic propaganda and agitation in the army is necessary and the formation of communist nuclei in each military organisation. The Communists must carry on the work for the most part illegally, for a refusal to do such work would be equal to treason against the revolutionary cause and inconsistent with belonging to the Third International."

The plan thus outlined has since been developed by all Bolshevik publicists. Bukharin—to quote only one of these—wrote: "We must pursue the tactics of universal support to the international revolution by means of revolutionary propaganda, strikes and revolts in Imperialist countries, and by propagating revolt and insurrections in the colonies of those countries. . . . The war-cry of the struggle is self-evident; it is the motto of the International Soviet Republic."

In the Bolshevik, it may be said, we have realised the truth of Dostoevsky's saying that the Russian is the first universal man, and of Merezhkovsky's declaration that "the Russian revolution is universal." Neither of these writers, I imagine, had any idea that his prophecy would work out as it has done. When they spoke of universality they meant the coming of the Kingdom of God, not of the republic of Karl Marx. To them the universal creed of the Bolsheviks would be the negation of religion, the creed of anti-Christ, a reversal to paganism before the fulfilment of the Third Testament—the Testament, that is, to unite sky with earth, spirit with flesh.

Frequently it is said that the Bolsheviks, unlike any other revolutionaries in history, have no patriotism; the

fact is mentioned that even the leaders of the French Revolution, anxious though they were to spread their ideas throughout the world, always put France before any other consideration.

The "White" *émigrés*, whose patriotism is often of the vulgar kind, are particularly vindictive on this point. They say that the Bolsheviks are a gang of disreputable foreigners and Jews who do not care what happens to Russia. The statistics concerning the nationality of the occupants of high office fail to bear out such an assertion; most of them are Russians. But this is an issue aside. The point under discussion is the universality of the Revolution. And here it may be emphasised that the Russian people, by which is meant the Russian peasantry, never had any conception of the State as it is understood in the West. And it follows, therefore, that they never had patriotism such as we have. Their horizon went little further than their village; and a foreigner was no more a stranger to them than a man from the next village. Like themselves, he was a human being to be treated no better and no worse than a neighbour, which is saying both little and much. But between the local limitations of the peasant and the wide aspirations of revolutionary internationalism there was an immense space. Up to a point the one served the interests of the other. But there came a time when a new tendency entered into the ideology of the Revolutionary movement. Its international enthusiasm remained; but together with it patriotism of a new order developed. Many Russians began to regard themselves as people destined to liberate the world, and to talk of themselves as having been appointed by history to carry out this great task. Soon they quite sincerely felt that in spite of all the illiteracy and darkness of her peasant masses, Russia had been endowed with some precious gift, denied to all other peoples, which would enable her to set humanity right. This almost mystic belief in Russian destiny has been inherited by the Bolsheviks. It is one of the strangest contradictions of the Revolution, which likes to think of itself as, above all, realistic.

Here, singularly enough, we can perceive a remote



contact with the Slavophil, with Dostoevsky, and in fact with all Russian thinkers of bygone days who believed in the universal mission of Russia. In the Bolshevik stirring up of Asiatic peoples we see also a coming into life of the idea so passionately held by a modern school of Russian thought that it is Russia's destiny to unite East and West. It may be argued that these ideas of Russian thinkers have been sadly perverted by the Bolsheviks. Whether or not we believe that this is so, we cannot but be interested in tracing their influences over present movements.

And here it is not inopportune to quote from a recent article by Trotsky. Trotsky was engaged in a little polemic with Gorky concerning the character of Lenin. Gorky, after describing Lenin as a typical Russian intellectual, said that the fundamental trait of his character was militant optimism, which was not a Russian trait. This last assertion at once aroused the indignation of Trotsky.\* "There you are!" he exclaimed. "How was it that Lenin with his fundamental trait of militant optimism and iron will was a 'typical Russian intellectual'? Isn't this a wholesale slander of the Russian nation? The Russia of olden days found its political expression in the Kerensky rule. But a new Russian spirit has been born, and without it the October Revolution would have been impossible. Allow me to ask, Alexei Maximovitch, whether the Bolshevik Party is a non-Russian phenomenon? These proletarian underground writers, these partisans, these red commissars, who day and night, their fingers ready on the triggers of their revolvers, lead men who are now red directors and managers, men who are prepared to lay down their lives to-morrow for the liberation of the Chinese coolies—the race, the tribe, the nation—do you wish me to ask whether it was some other than the Russian fire that produced them? They are Russian, born of Russia, and please note Russia of the twentieth century is not the old provincial Russia, but a new Russia, international, with iron in its character. The Bolshevik Party is the elect of the new Russia and Lenin its greatest writer and teacher."

\* *Communist Review*, December, 1924.



## CHAPTER IV

### LENINISM DEFINED

THE political system of the Bolsheviks is founded upon the teachings of Karl Marx. But in Soviet Russia they no longer speak of Marxism, but of Leninism. "Wherein," it will be asked at once, "does the one differ from the other?" To answer this question I cannot do better than quote from the Bolshevik leaders themselves. Leninism, it must be understood, is the orthodox religion of the Communist. Not everyone is allowed to interpret it; to dissent from the official version is to be guilty of blasphemy itself, to become a heretic of heretics, a creature politically damned and done for.

Stalin, one of the few men who rule Russia to-day, said that the distinctiveness of Leninism consisted in its achievement of having made more concrete "the theory and the tactics of the proletarian revolution in general, and the theory and tactics of proletarian dictatorship in particular." Kamenev, a leader of hardly less authority than Stalin, has attempted a more precise definition. When I was in Moscow, he made a most interesting speech, in the course of which he said:

"Two chapters are missing from Marx, one showing how the Socialist Revolution is made, the other describing the position of the working masses on the day following their assumption of power, and the problems they would be called upon to solve. These problems were written by Lenin, not only in books, but in life itself. He completed Marx. He showed us Socialism in reality. He introduced terrible forms of class struggle. He got into power by resorting to bloody civil war; and by putting forward as his central idea the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Great War had placed the workers in this

dilemma: Either they must seize power or be used as material for cannon."

The Bolsheviks are angry when they are told that Leninism is the application of revolutionary methods to the peculiar conditions of Russia; someone having in mind its barbarities made allusion to it as Asiatic Marxism. Whereupon the Bolsheviks retorted that this was an attempt to water down Leninism with "true vulgar levity, to destroy the very foundations of Lenin's life's work." And in all their utterances they insist that the form of Government in Russia is the only one possible in any country which is to pass to Socialism. No variation to suit local conditions is permissible; an exact replica of the Soviet Power it must be or nothing at all. Thus Lenin is represented as a figure of universal historical importance, a man of destiny, a master strategist of the World Revolution; and Leninism as the law by which the universe must revolve—there is no other way.

We thus have Leninism defined as distinct from Marxism: Lenin made Marxism more concrete; he introduced forms of bloody civil war; he insisted upon the dictatorship of the proletariat as the central idea of revolution. The question has yet to be put: "Wherein did the Russian Revolution, which expressed this Leninism, differ from the classic example of the French Revolution?" Comparisons between the two events are frequently made and some points of resemblance may be noted, both as to the conditions that preceded and produced upheaval, as well as to the nature of the upheaval itself: the alternating waves of reaction and liberalism; the sinister influences at Court; the decline in the popular belief in divine sanction for the autocracy; the corruption of the aristocracy, from which at the same time the first leaders of insurrection sprang; the passing of the Government from the hands of moderates to extremists; the spectre of famine, the cry for bread, the hunger for land, peasant risings, atheistic propaganda, class hatred, senseless destruction, terror and chaos.

Here we have briefly the main features of similarity between the two revolutions. Such features, it may be said, distinguish, not only the French and Russian revolutions,

but are largely common to most revolutions in history. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks claim that their Revolution does contain something new, something that marks a definite advance on all previous events of a like nature and that in fact opens the way at last to universal Communism. What is this something?

The French Revolution, the Bolsheviks explain, did not destroy the State apparatus as counselled by Marx in his perception of revolutionary strategy; it merely seized the apparatus and put it to the uses of the bourgeoisie. In a word, it smashed feudalism and founded the undiluted supremacy of the middle class.

The Bolsheviks preferred (as I have said) to take their example from the Paris Commune of 1871. Their policy was closely modelled upon that of the Communards, for whose deeds they have only one criticism: that they were not always sufficiently drastic. The Commune cried for the "expropriation of the expropriator." The Bolsheviks expropriated all property. The Commune demanded "the land for the peasants, the instruments of his labour for the workman, and work for all." The Bolsheviks carried out the first two measures; but afterwards, instead of work for all, there was work for none. The Commune appointed a committee to cut off the heads of traitors in order to avenge treachery. The Bolsheviks did likewise. The Paris Commune ordered the taking of hostages. The Bolsheviks did likewise. The Commune called for the abolition of the standing army and its replacement by a nation in arms. The Bolsheviks assert that they not only proclaimed but carried out corresponding measures. The Council of the Commune was elected by universal suffrage in the various districts of Paris, a condition that resulted in the majority of its members being workers or acknowledged workers' representatives. The Bolsheviks compare the Council of the Commune with the Soviet. The Commune lowered the salaries of all officials and servants of the State to the level of the workmen's wages. The Bolsheviks did the same until they discovered that it had brought the administrative machine almost to a standstill.

"The Commune was the living negation of formal

democracy, for in its development it signified the dictatorship of working-class Paris over the peasant community." \* So wrote Trotsky, and so the Bolsheviks interpreted the *rôle* of Petrograd and later of Moscow. "The Commune is not a Constituent Assembly," wrote Milliere, one of its leaders. "It is a Military Council. It must have one aim, victory; one weapon, force; one law, the law of social salvation." And another authority, Lissagaray, wrote accusingly of its leaders: "They could never understand that the Commune was a barricade, and not an administration." The Bolshevik leaders rid themselves of the Constituent Assembly; they formed themselves into a military council; they understood that the Russian Commune must be a barricade, not an administration.

Marx had advocated the smashing of the State machine, but he was only able to indicate vaguely the system by which it was to be replaced. He spoke of this system as "the proletariat organised as the ruling class consequent upon their conquest of democracy." As to the form it was to take, he was equally vague. It was not, he said, to be a parliamentary but a working corporation, legislative and executive at one and the same time, and it was to be founded on universal suffrage. Instead of deciding once in every few years which members the ruling class were to represent and repress the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, organised in communes as a means of securing the necessary workers, controllers, clerks and so forth for its business in the same way as individual suffrage serves any individual employer.

Here we get from Marx the first glimpse of the society which he desired to see erected upon the ruins of capitalism; it was to be a society in which the proletariat were to be the ruling class. That was the idea which had emerged from his study both of the French Revolution and of the Paris Commune, but particularly of the latter.

The French Revolution had ended in the "adaptation of the State to the needs of a bourgeois democratic system, from which he concluded that the revolution of the future must first concentrate upon smashing the State apparatus,

\* "The Defence of Terrorism," by L. Trotsky, 1921.



so as to clear the ground for building up a new order. The Paris Commune gave him a vague conception of what the new order should be : the rule of the proletariat.

After the period of the Paris Commune capitalism expanded rapidly in Europe ; militarism, too, made its appearance on a vast scale ; and the era of rival imperialisms began to dawn. It is claimed that the period between the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution was the period of Leninism ; that is to say, the period between 1870 and 1917. But Lenin in fact preached nothing new. He preached nothing that Marx had not preached before him. And Marx preached nothing that the Communards had not preached. But where he perceived only possibilities and laid down only general principles, Lenin created facts ; he attempted, in the words of Kamenev, " to set up Socialism in the reality." Marx, reading from the lessons of the Franco-Prussian campaign, saw how war could be turned to the advantage of the proletariat, who, once having been trained to use arms in the service of the bourgeois State, could be persuaded to turn those arms against such State. Lenin converted the Great War as far as Russia was concerned into civil war. Marx preached the need for revolution, for class hatred and struggle, violence and terror, Lenin practised these things. Marx from his study of the Paris Commune evolved the idea of proletarian dictatorship. Lenin set up a proletarian dictatorship in Russia. From the first, even at a time when nearly all the leading Bolsheviks were against him, he, and he alone, cried out : " All power to the Soviet ! "

But it was not difficult to devise a political form of Government to express the rule of the proletariat ; it was sufficient that a few intelligent men should exercise a dictatorship on its behalf. And about a dictatorship there is nothing particularly novel ; force is its chief requisite.

Lenin's difficulty was to plan a suitable economic organisation for his dictatorship. Here Marx offered him little guidance. And Marx himself got little enlightenment from the example of the Paris Commune, for while the latter spoke in one breath of expropriating everything, in another it demanded that " every man who



is not a landowner shall not pay a farthing of tax, that small fortunes shall be taxed but lightly and that all the burden of taxation shall fall upon the rich."

Lenin had similar ideas at the beginning of the Bolshevik Revolution, but the workers preferred the still more anarchical course of expropriating everything, down to the bootlaces and powder-puffs of the bourgeoisie. When ruin resulted, Lenin returned to his original views, though in a more modified form. For the New Economic Policy sought to squeeze rather than to suppress the rich.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BEGINNING OF ANARCHY

WHAT actually happened after the Bolsheviks obtained power in 1917? In previous chapters I have described Lenin's plans: briefly they may be summarised as follows: the old State apparatus to be smashed up, a workers' dictatorship on the basis of terror to be established, the whole trade and industry of the country to be nationalised, and the whole adult population to become the hired employés of the Proletarian State. Just before the October Revolution in 1917, which swept the Bolsheviks into power, there was a moment when Lenin thought that perhaps a peaceful compromise was possible.

There is, moreover, evidence that on the very eve of this Revolution he had a desire that it would take a different course than it did. His pamphlet, "Will the Bolsheviks Maintain Power?" published on October 1st, 1917, contained this passage: "The vital matter is not the confiscation of capitalist property but universal, all-embracing workers' control over the capitalists and their possible supporters. By means of confiscation alone one can do nothing, for in that there is no basis for organisation, or for the estimation of regular distribution. We shall readily substitute for confiscation the collection of just taxation, if only we can thereby exclude the possibility of any sort of evasion of account rendering, concealing of the truth or eluding the law." And some days later he said that even State Capitalism under a bourgeois Government would be a step towards State Socialism.

In another pamphlet entitled "Towards Soviets," also written in the period preceding the October Revolution, Lenin is revealed as suffering from the illusion that the peasants could seize the land in a peaceful manner. He advised them not to wait for the consent of the Constituent

Assembly, the date of which had yet to be fixed. "I am absolutely in favour," he wrote, "of the labourers' and peasants' Soviets at once taking all the land, themselves observing strict order and discipline, so as to prevent the least damage to machinery, buildings, cattle, on no account disturbing the course of agriculture and corn production, but, on the contrary, increasing it, because the soldiers require twice as much as before and the civil population must not go hungry."

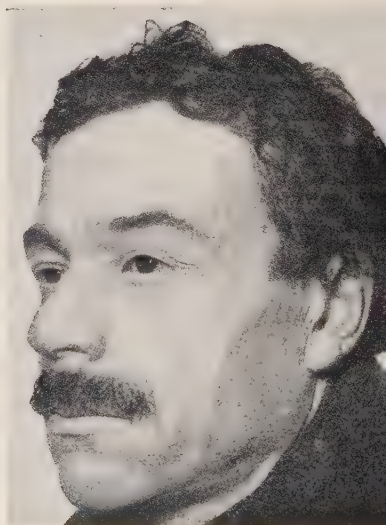
It is clear from these two passages that on the eve of the Revolution Lenin had in mind the control and not the confiscation of private capital, a peaceful and not a disorderly occupation of the land by the peasantry. But the masses had quite different ideas. They understood that a revolution meant seizing the factories for themselves, after which every one would become as rich or nearly as rich as the original owners. They did not stop to think that what is abundance for the few, divided up amongst the many is little; nor had they any doubts as to their capacity to run the expropriated enterprises on profitable lines. And many peasants saw in the upheaval, sanction to plunder, murder and destroy. Thus the Revolution was an elemental catastrophe, having as little regard for human convenience as an avalanche or an earthquake. It was the product of centuries of darkness, suffering and misrule, of war, hunger and corruption. Neither the Tsar nor Lenin nor Trotsky nor any other man made it. It happened because millions of little people so acted that it must happen.

But in spite of his desire that events should take another course, Lenin could not have been altogether surprised at what occurred. His fierce denunciation of the rich, his suggestion that capitalists should be hanged from lamp-posts, his idealisation of the workers—all these things showed that his mood was that of the crowd.

That this mood had long been in preparation was evident from an incident that occurred early in 1914—before the war—which came under my own personal notice. A well-known Russian millionaire was waited upon by a group of young men whom he had never seen before and







TYPES OF WORKERS WHO TOOK PART IN THE REVOLUTION.

who said to him: "You have no right to your fortune. You ought to divide it amongst the likes of us."

When the Revolution occurred, the workers and peasants took their own course. They had been told to plunder the plunderers, and they did so. They had been urged to hang the capitalists, and this they also did with good will. Lenin might have wished the upheaval to be less destructive, less bloody, less primitive—but he was not shocked that it proved otherwise.

This was the period when revolutionary extravagance was at its height, the period when the anarchy which had lain so long in the dark recesses of the primitive Russian soul surged to the surface. Of this anarchy only glimpses had been revealed in the past, but these glimpses had been sufficient to stimulate the enthusiasm of many writers, who saw in them the imperious protest of the Russian masses against evil, and who thereupon built up the gospel that Russia was destined to save the universe. In reality such manifestations were but fleeting sparks; the characteristic mood of the Russian masses was one of resignation, which sometimes expressed itself in holy contemplation, but which too often was little else than stupor. No doubt Tolstoy was under the impression of the higher mood when he preached anarchistic non-resistance, strangely misnamed in that it required for its practice the active assertion of a new order in the world; but, as universal acceptance was unattainable, where self-abnegation so complete was called for, this philosophy found few adherents even on Russian soil. The moujiks' non-resistance (or resignation) took a quite different turn; in a night, so to speak, it was converted into raging, demented anarchy. Thus both the resignation and the fanaticism on the face of the ikon were tragically misunderstood.

So much for the Russian masses; I have yet to speak of the Russian intelligentsia who aspired to be their leaders. Here, again, the alliance of the Church with the autocracy had fatal issue; for when the autocracy denied the intelligentsia political expression, the intelligentsia lost faith in their ally, Orthodox religion. But the intelligentsia were not unenlightened like the moujik, and so could not content

themselves with resignation. As they had denied formal religion and turned to altruism, they could not follow Tolstoy and seek consolation in a spiritual philosophy of non-resistance. Yet there was no common ideal to bind them together. They hated the Government, but they did not love one another. Lack of unity has always been the curse of Russia; to this day it is said that where three Russians assemble together five political parties are to be found.

Although divided into many groups, the revolutionary intelligentsia, roughly speaking, were composed of two streams. One shared with Tolstoy idealisation of the peasants, and passionately believed that they had a revelation for the world. Tolstoy's whole gospel of non-resistance was built upon appreciation of the submissiveness of the peasantry. Their lack of patriotism he interpreted as love for all men, thus upholding the common belief that the Russian was a truly universal man. The section of the intelligentsia to whom I have alluded did not go so far as that, but none the less they indulged in extravagant hopes in the peasantry. In those days, young girls belonging to refined families would marry moujiks that they might get into closer contact with the village; "going among the people" was, in fact, an exile deliberately sought by many inspired individuals. To-day their disillusionment is tragic and complete, but it is just as unreasonable as was their original enthusiasm.

Another section of the intelligentsia looked at the masses from quite a different angle: as material for class war and for world revolution. The leaders of both sections had been driven out of the country by the Imperial autocracy; and exile had given them opportunity for studying Western political systems and theories on the spot, and of seeing how modern science and industrial organisation could amass great wealth. There could be no question as to where their choice should lie; Socialism was readily selected as the purpose to be achieved. Such decision was consistent with the broad humanitarian instinct of the Russian nature. I say this deliberately, and in doing so contradict nothing that I have previously said. The Russian nature during its long period of submissiveness and suffering has accumu-

lated great vigour and resource; but above all it has learnt how to love as well as how to hate. The bewilderment of the intelligentsia was quite explicable. One section desired to remain faithful to Western forms, to bring about Socialism slowly by measures of social reform, but on attaining power at the start it got badly entangled in Russian anarchy and, being incapable of extricating itself, resorted to weak, confused measures, and so stumbled and fell. The other section was composed of old Bolsheviks and of people who became Bolsheviks when the Party was successful—that is to say, when it seized power.



## CHAPTER VI

### LENIN AND TROTSKY: NEW HISTORICAL MATERIAL

THE Bolshevik seizure of power did not take place until October 1917. Lenin's programme,\* which I have already summarised, was written by him in the preceding August and September, when mass tumult was at its height. The ideas which he then expressed must therefore be regarded as the culmination of his revolutionary thought. It is interesting to inquire here how soon these ideas began to germinate in his mind.

From an early age he had good reason to detest the Imperial *régime* and all that it stood for. His brother was implicated in a plot to assassinate Alexander III, and was executed in 1887. When Lenin heard the news of his brother's fate he said: "It is not necessary to go by that path. *We* shall not go by it." Immediately he began preparation for his revolutionary future and became an earnest disciple of Marx. He entered the faculty of Law at the University of Kazan, but was excluded for a while because he took part in a students' revolt. His scholastic record was brilliant; and we have it on the word of his own mother that he was an exemplary son. On leaving the University he at once engaged in revolutionary activity. His ideas were large. The goal to be aimed at, so he said, was not the liberation of the Russian people from Tsardom so much as the liberation of the workers from all forms of servitude. From that moment he became the proletarian champion. A few years later he was arrested and sent to Siberia, from whence he escaped and went abroad. In 1900 we find him in London. He lived for some time in Bloomsbury, and shocked his landlady because, regarding curtains as unhygienic, he dispensed with them altogether from the window of his bedroom. He had a passion for

\* See Chapter II; also "State and Revolution," by V. Lenin.



LENIN WITH HIS PARENTS AND SISTERS AND BROTHERS.

Lenin is seen seated on the right. His brother, who was executed, is shown standing, resting his arm upon his father's shoulder.



hygiene. He was not a dandy as Robespierre was, but his appearance was always neat and scrupulously clean. Most of his time in London was taken up in reading and writing in the British Museum Library. Subjects without bearing upon the struggles of the working classes did not interest him in the least. It has been said of him that he was probably the most extreme utilitarian whom the laboratory of history has produced, or again that he was the most powerful machinist of the Revolution.

Many writers have attempted to describe his character, but few of them, I think, have succeeded in giving a truthful picture of it. What impressed them most was his simplicity, firmness, and directness, all of which they attributed—and rightly so—to his consciousness of aim. Such qualities, it is true, are sure signs of genius. But they are not the only signs, and it often happens that together with them exist qualities of quite the reverse order. And so it was with Lenin. With his simplicity went complexity, with his firmness flexibility, and with his directness diplomacy, even to the limit of craftiness. In reality, there was no contradiction in his character; for it was dominated by the terrific sincerity of his purpose, and on that account it was whole and complete. It was two-sided, as I have said, but these two sides were in harmony, not in conflict, and either could be brought into play as the circumstance required, and the change over could be made with lightning rapidity.

By nature he was a despot; when in exile he would always get up and leave any company when his views were contradicted. He knew what he wanted, and he stopped at nothing to attain it. And he knew what the masses wanted and what they were thinking. He could express their thoughts, because these thoughts were his own. He was the greatest of all proletarians and at the same time one of the best educated men in the world. His thirst for knowledge was unquenchable—that is, for knowledge that might be useful for his ends. He was an accomplished linguist, and when the Revolution was at its height and fighting was taking place over barricades he made use of odd moments to study the Czecho-Slovakian grammar.



When he was living in London one of his nearest colleagues said of him, "From this dough come Robespierres," while another remarked that he had "a deadly bite." It was said of Danton that he was a "Colossus with a Tartar's head." Lenin was far from being a Colossus in size; but he resembled Danton in that he had a Tartar's head. He had no conventional sentimentality, and he detested it in others. Trotsky tells us, too, that Lenin had no psychological weaknesses. But he relates of him a little story which shows that he was not altogether destitute of emotionalism. The supreme moment of the Revolution had come; siege was laid to the Winter Palace, while at the same time the second Congress of the Soviets was meeting at Smolny Institute, the revolutionary headquarters which had formerly been an aristocratic school under the patronage of the Court, where young ladies were brought up in an eighteenth-century atmosphere. Exciting hours went by. It was early morning. Lenin and Trotsky lay down on the floor of a room at Smolny to snatch a little rest. When they awoke Lenin smiled and said: "The transition from the state of illegality, from being driven in every direction, to power is too sudden. It makes me dizzy."

And then he made the sign of the Cross.

A characteristically Russian act. This reminds me that not long ago some Communists were detected wearing crosses under their shirts. The recently published Bolshevik version of the murder of the Imperial Family says that the Emperor's last gesture as he sank on the floor of the cellar where he was murdered, was to cover one of his children with one hand while making the sign of the Cross with the other.

"Religion," say the Bolsheviks, "is opium for the people!"

But to go back to Lenin and his character—his intense fondness for children and animals has often been remarked upon. In this fondness there was nothing extraordinary, I think. Men who can be cruel to adult human beings are often kind to children and animals. Lenin hated sentimentality, but he was not without sentiment. Much of his proletarian advocacy is strongly flavoured with sentiment.

What was most characteristic of him was his laugh. In

general, it may be said that nothing is more expressive in life than the laugh. Lenin attached great importance to it. His favourite saying was : " He who laughs last laughs best." He said it when as a young man he was exiled in London, and some of his intelligentsia comrades thought that he had gone off the track in his rigid insistence that the proletariat was the only revolutionary class in society. And he said it again when he returned to Russia in 1917 and at once prophesied that the Revolution was not to be an ordinary democratic revolution but the beginning of a socialist revolution which was to herald the downfall of the capitalist system the world over. " Lenin is ruining himself," was the verdict of many leaders of the Bolshevik Party who are now ruling Soviet Russia. And Lenin's reply was : " He who laughs last laughs best." In those days nearly everyone of importance deserted him.

A curious little habit of Lenin's was to shield his eyes with his hands and to look through his fingers at any visitor whom he wished to size up. He applied this method to Wells, and afterwards said of him : " What a Philistine ! What a monstrous little bourgeois ! "

Some Bolshevik writers have pointed out that, despite his international aims, Lenin was national. But they have wrongly said that this nationalism was a characteristic of the Russian proletariat alone ; here they could not escape the narrowness of their own faith. More truthful would it be to say that Lenin's character was profoundly Russian. He was Tolstoy on the reverse side, a fanatic in action. A great proletarian but also a great moujik. Although his father was a petty nobleman, the family came of peasant stock. Scratch every Russian and you will find a moujik ; the moujik may have disappointed the intelligentsia, but what greatness there is in Russia belongs to him.

It would seem that Lenin's ideas as to how the Revolution would take place assumed concrete shape in his mind during the turmoil of 1905.

At that time a soviet was set up in Petrograd, and Lenin, who was hiding in the city, a fugitive from the law, attended several of its meetings. It is narrated that he sat in a

balcony high up in the assembly hall, far removed from the gaze of the general public. There were many who thought the Revolution of 1905 no more than a passing outbreak of elemental madness. But Lenin said: "It was a great Revolution. Not because there was a manifesto of October 30th (by which the Tsar proclaimed a constitution), not because the bourgeoisie began to move, but because there was, albeit unsuccessful, an armed insurrection of the workers of Moscow and for the space of one month a Petrograd soviet flitted before the eyes of the world proletariat. And the Revolution will be reborn and will win." And thereafter Lenin's motto was a Democratic Dictatorship of Workers and Peasants. Thus he totally rejected all compromise with other classes, an attitude which led to the division of the Social Democratic Party into two groups, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.

When the first Revolution broke out, Lenin was in Zurich, where he was financially helped by an old Swiss merchant who later went to Russia to live as a permanent guest of the Revolution, and some time afterwards disappeared. When news of what was happening in Russia reached him, Lenin immediately wrote a number of "Letters from Afar," in which he outlined in brief the policy which he later elaborated and which I have described in preceding chapters. He considered that the Revolution was then developing along the lines of the Paris Commune, that the workers had begun to smash "the old state machine," and recommended the formation of a workers' militia composed of both sexes, to be under the orders of the Workers' and Soldiers' Soviets, the women to engage in welfare work, the men to take over the administration and to seize the houses of the rich so that the poor might be accommodated, and to distribute supplies fairly so that every family got bread and "no wealthy adult had a drop of milk until the children were satisfied." Such measures, he made haste to add, were not Socialism. They were only concerned with the distribution of the articles of consumption under the conditions created by the war, and not with the reorganisation of production. They did not, he explained, amount to "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat,"

but simply to a "Revolutionary-democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasants."

Yet when, fourteen days later (on April 4th), Lenin arrived in Petrograd, no one heeded his words. He was accorded a State reception; and the moderate Socialists were present to welcome him. But as soon as he stepped from the train he brushed these worthies aside and announced to the assembled masses his conviction that the bourgeois revolution was at an end and that the world socialist revolution had begun.

Thenceforth he began a lonely struggle.

Many accounts of the Revolution have been written. These accounts were necessarily superficial, for the facts available were insufficient to justify any attempt to construct history. But the controversies which occurred of late within the Communist Party place at our disposal much precious material concerning the events of this period. It is, I think, time that such material should be submitted to analysis, thus permitting of a re-valuation of the heroes and events of the Revolution.

From the moment when the war began Lenin defined his position with crystal clearness. He stood for defeatism—the defeat of the national bourgeoisie, which he defined as the fundamental principle of revolutionary internationalism. He also stood for civil war [war between the workers and the bourgeoisie]; and "a democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry."

Trotsky, at that time, profoundly disagreed with him. He was against the war, but he wished to bring it to an end by political methods, not by defeatism and civil strife. It followed that he rejected Lenin's idea of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry for Russia. Instead, he believed in "the conquest of power in the name of the Socialist Revolution"; in a word, he was not then averse to a compromise with the bourgeoisie.

To Lenin's idea of democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasants he opposed the idea of permanent revolution. This conflict of opinion between the two leaders as to the fate of the Russian Revolution is of great importance for the study of past events, no less than for speculation



concerning the future ; for we must remember that the fate of the Russian Revolution has yet to be determined. Both Lenin's and Trotsky's ideas on the subject took shape in their minds in the turbulent days of 1905. We know what Lenin's ideas were. What did Trotsky mean by his theory of permanent revolution ? He meant that though it might be possible to abolish Imperialism and set up a workers' government in its place, constant and unceasing revolution would still be necessary until Socialism was established. But he did not believe that this workers' government could maintain power and convert its temporary dictatorship into a prolonged Socialist dictatorship unless the proletariat of some strong Western State got into power and came to its rescue. And in justification of such conclusion he reasoned thus : To secure its victory the proletarian vanguard will have to make deep inroads, not only into feudal, but also into bourgeois property rights. As a consequence, it will be bound to come into conflict with the broad masses of the peasantry with whose co-operation it attained power as well as with all sections of the bourgeoisie. No escape from this dilemma is possible within national limitations. For these national limitations render inevitable a repetition of the errors of social patriotism, and therefore, unless the Revolution expands on an international plane, it is doomed to perish.

Trotsky held that Europe had outlived self-defensive nationalism, which arrested progress and was hopelessly conservative, and that if it was to proceed to a higher level of development the United States of Europe must emerge.

The United States of Europe—this was the revolutionary motto which he gave to the proletariat of all nations in their struggle for power. But while he thought that, if the opportunity presented itself, the workers of one nation should take the initiative in seizing power, he did not believe that if they were successful they could retain power for long unless the workers of another nation, one, moreover, of first importance, soon gained a similar success.

Europe he regarded as a single economic entity, all the

component parts of which were ripe for revolution. It was one of two axles of the World's State, the United States being the other. But because of its economic self-sufficiency, Europe could become a Proletarian United States, without waiting for America, Asia, Africa, or Australia to do likewise.

The theory of unceasing or permanent revolution was not new. Originally it was propounded by Marx. The whole question resolved itself therefore into one of interpretation. The essence of Marxism is regard for the relationship of social forces. There must be no premature seizure of power. Hence Marx urged that the Revolution must be unceasing until all the more or less wealthy classes had been removed from power, and until the proletariat—not part of the proletariat nor yet a few intellectuals on behalf of the proletariat—had captured political power. Trotsky held this to mean that in one jump Russia could leap from a Tsarist government to a workers' state, but, as we have seen, he did not believe that the workers' state could for long maintain itself in isolation. Lenin, on the other hand, interpreted Marx's theory of unceasing revolution to mean that the Revolution would progress in stages, that first it would limit the power of absolutism, thus satisfying the bourgeoisie, next would establish a republic, thus satisfying the "people," *i.e.* the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, and, thirdly, that it would transform itself into a Socialist revolution, thus satisfying the proletariat, and the poorest and a part of the middle peasantry.

But at the same time Lenin insisted that Marx had not intended that before every ascent it would be necessary to measure off a modest distance, not more than one stage, for example. He had admitted the possibility of peculiar circumstances arising in which the Revolution might proceed at high speed through all stages. And this, Lenin claimed, was what actually happened in Russia; the peculiar circumstances having been created by the war.

It remains yet to be discovered what Lenin meant when, as far back as 1905, he advocated a "Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasants," a motto which he repeated in his "Letters from Afar," on the downfall of

the Tsar, in March 1917. On this last occasion, it will be recalled, he made a distinction between Democratic Dictatorship of Proletariat and Peasants and Dictatorship of Proletariat and Peasants; the former was to be the preliminary, the latter the final stage on the road to power. But on both occasions Lenin was drawing his conclusions from the fact that the masses on their own initiative had formed Soviets; in 1905 these Soviets were composed of workers, whilst those of 1917 included both workers and soldiers, amongst whom were peasants. Clearly, he anticipated that, if the Soviet did not become the Government, they would control any government in office, and that in either eventuality the procedure would be democratic. What he meant by "Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasants" can only be judged from the form of government which he was largely instrumental in setting up after October 1917.

That Lenin was convinced that this Government could survive is certain; for he entirely disagreed with Trotsky's idea that the Revolution must necessarily come into conflict with the broad masses of the peasantry. He believed that the workers' government would prove to the peasants that it could be of more use to them than a bourgeois government, and that an alliance between workers and peasants could be established with a view to the realization of Socialism. Trotsky's attitude, he said, was a denial of the *rôle* of the peasantry. When Lenin alludes to the peasantry, it must be remembered that he has in mind the poorer peasants and, in part, the middle peasants.

Here, then, we have the fundamental difference that existed between Lenin and Trotsky in the years prior to the Revolution. It is a difference the importance of which is serious, for if Lenin should prove to be right the Revolution would have the support of the majority of peasants, and therefore of the overwhelming majority of the Russian people. It would therefore survive. But if Trotsky should be right it was destined to perish unless it received external support.

What did Lenin say of Trotsky before the Revolution? "A shuffler, . . . a man of no views, . . . a poor hero of phraseology, . . . a diplomatist of the meanest description,

. . . an intellectual opportunist. . . . If things are going well Trotsky preaches the Bolshevik line, but if things are going to the bad he inclines to the right." On another occasion Lenin remarked: "Trotsky talks right politics disguised in left phraseology."

And what did Trotsky say of Lenin? He said that he was "a professional exploiter of every backwardness in the Russian workers' movement," and added, "He has a greed for power and is a candidate for the post of dictator."

Finally, what did Trotsky once think of Bolshevism? "Bolshevism is barbaric, Asiatic and uncultured."

Trotsky did not join the Bolsheviks until after the downfall of the Imperial regime. He is regarded as the most European of all the Bolshevik leaders. His favourite motto is: "Not by politics alone does a man thrive." On all occasions he preaches the need for culture: culture in work, culture in life, culture in language.

## CHAPTER VII

### LENIN STANDS ALONE

I have said that Lenin's first act on stepping from the train at Petrograd when returning from exile on April 3rd, 1917, was to declare that the bourgeois revolution was at an end in Russia, and that the world socialist revolution had begun. Moderate Socialists were evidently suffering from the illusion that his views had undergone some change in the short time that had elapsed since he wrote his "Letters from Afar"; or else they had paid little attention to these letters; otherwise how could their attendance at the station to welcome him be accounted for? But Lenin looked upon all moderate Socialists as representatives of the Capitalist class and counter-revolutionaries, as, indeed, he regarded all men who did not accept his policy, no matter what political label they attached to themselves.

The hostility of moderate Socialists, once they discovered that Lenin had no use for their programme, was only to be expected. But a number of prominent leaders within the Bolshevik Party itself, all of whom had been devoted followers of Lenin during their revolutionary careers, also opposed him. They disagreed with his interpretation of the character of the Revolution as well as with his views on war and peace. Both questions, as I will show, were intimately bound together.

From the moment when he arrived in Petrograd Lenin said that a revolutionary war to defend the country would only be justifiable if power were transferred to the proletariat and a complete rupture brought about with "all the interests of capital"; and he urged that an active propaganda be undertaken to explain "the indissoluble connection of Capitalism with the Imperialist War, and to show that it is impossible to end it without violence and without the overthrow of Capitalism." None of the Bolsheviks favoured a







M. KAMENEV.  
Formerly Commissar of Interior and Foreign Trade, and  
President of the Council of Commissars.



M. RYKOV.  
President of the Council of Commissars.

continuation of the war, but a number of leaders disagreed with Lenin as to the means which should be taken to bring it to an end. And this disagreement resulted from a profound difference of opinion concerning the nature of the Revolution itself.

The opposition to Lenin at that time was led by Kamenev, Rykov, and Nogin, three men who afterwards were to attain to high places in the Bolshevik Government; Zinoviev joined them later. Their point of view was that the bourgeois democratic revolution which had resulted in the downfall of the Imperial *régime* had not come to an end.

What was the actual situation at the moment? A Provisional Government not averse from carrying on the war was in office. Along with this Government existed the Soviets of Soldiers, Peasants, and Workers, that is to say, of the masses whose voice in the last resort was bound to be decisive.

The Soviets did not break with the Provisional Government, but were content to exercise pressure upon it. This pressure could be very real, of course; but to make it so there had to be consciousness of its potency and desire to use it to the fullest extent, neither of which existed at that time. And the reason undoubtedly was that the Soviets were then under the domination of the petty bourgeoisie.

And who were the petty bourgeoisie? The majority of the Russian people, the peasantry. Here we have an explanation of the Soviet's inclination to compromise with the Government of the bourgeoisie or capitalist class, as Lenin termed the Provisional Government. No wonder his opponents, claiming conformity with Marxism, declared that as the bourgeois revolution had not yet ended, a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry was then unattainable.

It was true that at this stage the agrarian revolution had not begun; the peasants had so far refrained from seizing the land. Everyone was awaiting the summoning of a constituent assembly to determine the fate of the nation; and, meanwhile, the Soviet pressed the Provisional Government to conclude peace, and appealed to the belligerent nations to lay down their arms. And even the *Pravda*, the official

organ of the Bolshevik Party, favoured the defending of the front while these efforts to end the war were being made.

It could not very well have advocated any other course, for as it believed that the bourgeois revolution had not ended, it was logically bound to agree to a compromise with the bourgeois power. No good Marxist would urge the seizure of power against the will of the masses.

Lenin's opponents were not less anxious for the ascendancy of the proletariat than he was. How did they propose that this should come about? Summed up, their attitude was as follows: Russia is a backward State. It is, in fact, the most petty bourgeois country in Europe. It is therefore impossible to reckon upon the sympathy of the masses for the socialist revolution. . . . The West must take the initiative for the socialist revolution. The revolution in Russia cannot advance beyond the stage reached by the French Revolution. It is, therefore, bound to end in the establishment of parliamentary government. The Soviets are destined to fade away, to perish! There is nothing to be done then but to acquiesce in the inevitable and begin to prepare the masses for Socialism through the medium of such channels as may be available—constitutional channels.

Lenin reasoned quite otherwise. "Theory is grey, my friend," he said; "green is the immortal tree of life." And then he quoted Marx and Engels: "Our theories are not a dogma but a guide for action."

And how did he answer his opponents' assertion that the bourgeois democratic revolution had not ended? The shifting of power from one class to another was, he said, the fundamental symptom of revolution, and as a consequence of the revolution in Russia power had passed from the feudal aristocratic land-owning class to the capitalist or bourgeois class. From this fact he concluded that the capitalist or bourgeois democratic revolution was at an end.

What was to come next? Theory said: a dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. But life had turned out differently. Existing side by side at one and the same time were both the supremacy of the capitalists and the revolu-

tionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, which voluntarily gave up power to the capitalist class and also voluntarily became a mere appendix of it. Thus the formula of "the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" had already been realised in an original manner. Life had brought it into the domain of reality, had invested it with flesh and blood, and in the process had modified it.

This was the situation as Lenin saw it; but neither he nor anyone else knew what would happen on the morrow. There was a possibility that the peasants would take both the land and the power, parting company with the bourgeoisie, and this before the proletariat could establish its leadership over them. But that was a possibility for which Lenin said he had made provision. Such provision was a programme of class war in the village; the rural labourers and the poorest peasants were to be set against the employing peasants, whose property was to be subjected to confiscation together with that of the landowner.

But whatever might happen in the future, immediate tactics had to be determined upon. Here Lenin asked himself the question: "Is it possible to set up in Russia a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry separate from a capitalist government?" His answer was that the only hope of so doing was to segregate the proletarian elements from the timid lower bourgeoisie, who were hesitating between the capitalist class and the Bolshevik Party. That once done, they would be able, he said, to make the ground so "hot" for the latter that under certain conditions it would be forced to take over the power. He was not very clear as to how it would be possible to make the ground "hot." His policy was one of patient propaganda, the purpose in view being to convert the majority of members of the Soviets, then supporters of the Social Revolutionary and Menshevik Parties, to the ideas of Bolshevism. Whereupon Kamenev chided him with desertion of the party of the masses to form a group of propagandists. He replied: "It is essential for a certain time to be in a minority against the mass intoxication of Chauvinism." And when Kamenev reproached him with counting



upon an immediate development of the bourgeois democratic revolution into a socialist revolution he said: "This is not true. Not only do I not count upon the immediate development of our revolution into a socialist one, but I have uttered definite warnings against any such expectation. Not the introduction of Socialism is our immediate aim; more than this, it is impossible to introduce in Russia even a state organised on the lines of the Paris Commune, since it is essential that the majority of deputies of the Soviets shall be brought to realise the fallacy and mischief of the policy followed by the parties whom they are now supporting."

Thereupon he was accused of anarchism. And he was also reproached with Blanquism, that is, an attempt to seize power on behalf of a minority. To the first charge, that of anarchism, he replied: "Anarchism is the denial of the need for the State during the period of transition from the supremacy of the capitalists to the supremacy of the proletariat; whereas I insist on the necessity for a state organisation during this period, not a parliamentary bourgeois state, but a state on the lines of the Paris Commune, without a police, a standing army or a bureaucracy apart from and above the people."

To the accusation of Blanquism, that is, of a desire to seize power on behalf of a minority, he replied that the Soviets were the direct organisation of the majority of the people, and that an agitation reduced to a struggle for influence within these Soviets could not possibly land into the morass of Blanquism.

Again, it was asserted that he wished to leap over the unfinished bourgeois revolution—unfinished because it had not as yet passed through the peasant movement—in order to arrive immediately at the socialist revolution. To which he said: "But I have always insisted that the power could only pass from the Provisional Government, representing the bourgeoisie, to the Soviets, the majority of whom were peasants, that is to say, petty bourgeoisie. It might have been different had I said, 'No Tsar, but a labour government.'"

It will be recalled that the latter was at one time Trotsky's plan.

The interest of the foregoing analysis of the views held by different Bolshevik leaders in April 1917 lies in the revelation that not one of them desired that power should pass to a minority. Even Lenin, who was almost alone in thinking that the bourgeois revolution had ended, favoured a propagandist agitation for securing a majority in the Soviets, which assemblies he believed represented the majority of the nation.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HOW POWER WAS SEIZED : BOLSHEVIK QUARRELS

IN the preceding chapter I discussed the different theories held by the Bolshevik leaders early in April of 1917 when the Provisional Government was in power, and showed that Lenin was the only one who rejected all idea of compromise with the Government ; but that even he desired that a majority should be obtained for his views in the Soviets before any attempts were made to set up a dictatorship of these bodies.

How did all these theories fare when it came to life itself ? Who proved right, Lenin or the others ?

On April 21st the masses of Petrograd went out on to the streets and demonstrated against Milliukov's repudiation of the Soviets' declaration in favour of peace which he had formally conveyed to the Allies. On that occasion the cry, " Down with the Provisional Government," was raised, but a compromise was patched up between the Soviet leaders and the Government, the latter sending an explanatory despatch to the Allies.

At the moment a number of minor Bolsheviks argued in favour of an immediate attempt to seize power. But Lenin insisted that such an attempt would be " an adventure of Blanquism," and counselled friendly persuasion within the Soviets with a view to gaining a majority.

A second mass demonstration was planned for June 10th, with the purpose of bringing pressure to bear upon the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which was then in session. Fearing an armed struggle, the leaders of the Congress prohibited the demonstration, and the Bolsheviks, who did not feel strong enough as yet to take their own line, acquiesced in this decision. It was upon Lenin's initiative that the demonstration had been planned, and he was among those who agreed to its abandonment. His desire

had been to reconnoitre the position, but so soon as he found formidable obstacles in his path he was willing to withdraw.

The policy of the Provisional Government played straight into the hands of the Bolsheviki, or, to speak quite correctly, into those of Lenin; for when the masses clamoured for peace it did all that it could to goad them into war, and the only man who rightly understood their mood was Lenin.

Early in July there was another spontaneous rising of the Petrograd workers and soldiers, who cried, "Down with the Capitalist Ministers!" and "All Power to the Soviets!" The Bolshevik leaders identified themselves with this rising, but the Provisional Government proved strong enough to suppress it, and Lenin was forced to take flight to Finland.

His nearest colleagues say that on this occasion, just as in April, he had desired nothing more than a reconnaissance of opposing forces, for he knew that all the Soviets of the chief towns in the country still favoured the patriotic policy of the Government, and therefore he had no intention of attempting a conquest of power behind their backs. Here was proof of the consistency of his aim.

But soon after the July rising doubts seized him as to whether the Soviets were truly representative of the masses, and he proposed that the Party should concentrate its energy upon stimulating insurrection outside these bodies, and that, if power were attained, new Soviets should be created. This advice was rejected, but it indicated clearly in which direction Lenin's mind was moving.

Then came the attempt of General Kornilov to make himself the Napoleon of Russia. At once all the revolutionary parties, the Social Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviki united against the common peril. But Lenin lost no time in reminding them that it was one thing to fight Kornilov and another to support the Government.

A few days after the affair was liquidated he made a tactical move for a compromise. But this offer of a compromise did not spare the Provisional Government. The power was to pass from its hands to the Soviets, to whom a Government of Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries was

to be responsible. And the Bolsheviks were to drop their demand for a "dictatorship of the proletariat and poorest peasants" and to abandon all revolutionary methods for the attainment of this end. In return they were to be granted absolute freedom of propaganda in the elections for the Constituent Assembly, which should be convoked without any fresh delays.

These were the terms in which Lenin suggested his compromise: "Now and only now, maybe in the next few days, possibly in the next few weeks, could such a government be organised and established quite peaceably. It could guarantee the peaceful forward movement of the Russian Revolution, and increase the chances of accelerating the world movement towards peace and the victory of Socialism. Only for the sake of this peaceful development of the Revolution—a chance extremely rare in history and extremely valuable, a chance uniquely rare—only for the sake of this can the Bolsheviks who are believers in the World Revolution and in revolutionary methods accept such a compromise, and in my opinion they should accept such a compromise."

This document is of great importance. It furnishes additional proof of Lenin's consistency of aim, his passionate desire to see power in the hands of the Soviets, regardless of the fact that the majority in the Soviets was composed of the opponents of Bolshevism, and his reluctance to engage in any insurrection outside these bodies. Yet his recognition of the authority of a constituent assembly did suggest some deviation from this course, for a constituent assembly might have declared for a parliament, and that would have meant the end of the Soviets. Perhaps Lenin felt certain that the Bolsheviks would gain a majority in the constituent assembly; if so, as subsequent events showed, he would have been sadly disillusioned. A more likely explanation is that the Kornilov episode "scared" him, and that he was afraid that a prolongation of disorder might lead to a military dictatorship and the suppression of all revolutionary parties, Mensheviks as well as Bolsheviks.

The offer of a compromise bore no results; for the Soviets had not yet found Kerensky out. From now on



events moved at a swift pace. Some Bolsheviks conducted an intensive propaganda among the masses, and inspired them to change their representatives, which, according to the Soviet system, could be done at any time if a majority of electors declared for it. Within three weeks they had won over to their side a majority in the Petrograd Soviet, to the chairmanship of which Trotsky was elected. The Moscow Soviet too passed over to their side. Lenin quickly responded to this intensification of the revolutionary mood of the masses. Immediately all the opponents of the Bolsheviks brought against them the sneering accusation that they were afraid to take the power. To which Lenin replied with a sensational pamphlet (dated October 1, 1917) entitled: "Will the Bolsheviks Maintain Power?" He had no doubt that they would maintain power. After the 1905 Revolution Russia, he said, was ruled by 130,000 landowners—"and yet they tell us that Russia will not be able to be governed by the 1,240,000 members of the Bolshevik Party—governing in the interest of the poor against the rich."

And then he proceeded to outline his programme. This programme bears a close resemblance to that which I summarised in a preceding chapter (see Chapter II) and which was written about the same time but published later under the title, "State and Revolution." But one striking difference between the two has to be noted. Whereas in "State and Revolution" Lenin advocated the immediate conversion of the means of production into common property, in "Will the Bolsheviks Maintain Power?" he said that the vital matter was not the confiscation of capitalist property but universal all-embracing workers' control over the capitalists and their supporters. "We shall readily," he wrote, "substitute for confiscation the collection of just taxation, if only we can thereby exclude the possibility of any sort of evasion of account-rendering, concealing the truth, and eluding the law. . . . At the same time, extra obstinate and non-submissive capitalists will have to be punished by the confiscation of the whole of their wealth, and by imprisonment."

How did he propose that the Workers' State should

enforce its will? "Means of control and forced labour," he urged, "are stronger than the laws of the Convention and its guillotine. The guillotine only frightened, only crushed resistance. For us that is not enough. We must not only frighten the capitalists so that they feel the all-pervading strength of the proletarian State, and forget to think of active resistance to it, but we must crush also their passive resistance, which is undoubtedly far more dangerous and far more harmful. We must not only crush every sort and kind of resistance, but we have to impose work upon the framework of the new state organisation. It is not enough to throw out the capitalists; it is necessary (after having kicked out the incapable, unreliable, passive resisters) to put them new to state service. . . . The belligerent capitalist State has itself given us the means and weapons whereby we can carry out this policy. This means is the bread monopoly, bread cards, and universal industrial conscription. . . . He who works not neither shall he eat."

Reading Lenin's writings about this period—the period just before the Bolshevik Revolution—one is struck with the light optimism with which he entered upon the task of re-making Russia; it is evident that in those days he had a quite inadequate conception of the difficulties that confronted him. Again and again we find him saying that the means at the disposal of the workers' dictatorship would be simple and faultless. "Capitalism," he went on, "has created the apparatus for keeping all the accounts, the banks, syndicates, post, consumers' societies, and unions of employés. All that needs to be done is to take over this apparatus. The old State will be smashed, shattered, blown-up, but in its place we can bring into action immediately an administrative machine of about ten, if not twenty, millions. . . . Only *we* are capable of creating such an apparatus, for we are assured of the full unlimited sympathy of the vast majority of the population. This apparatus only *we* can create, because we have conscious workers disciplined by a long apprenticeship to capitalism. . . . The most important thing at the present time is to get rid of the prejudice of the bourgeois intelligentsia, that only special officials entirely dependent on

capital by their whole social position can carry on the administration of the State." Thus Lenin was relying upon the discipline which the Capitalist State had created for the building up of his new Socialist order.

While he did not shrink from employing the guillotine, or its equivalent, he believed that withholding food rations would prove to be the most effective weapons in the hands of the Proletarian State; and he was quite ready to substitute drastic taxation for naked confiscation. Here it is interesting to recall that earlier on when he advised the peasants' Soviets to seize the land for themselves he urged them to maintain rigorous order and discipline, and on no account to indulge in destruction. Evidently he desired that as little turmoil as possible should accompany the new revolution.

Meanwhile, Kerensky had summoned a Democratic Conference. Lenin at first approved of the action of the Bolsheviks in taking part in this Conference. "Our cause must be defended even in the stable," he said. But a few days later he was convinced that participation was a mistake.

"We must honestly take our stand for the revolutionary mass fight," he now urged. His impatience was growing. All the while he was tortured with fears lest the Government might at last act with decision and extinguish the Soviets. His strategical plan was ready, and provided for the arrest of the Government and General Staff and the seizure of certain points. He had always said that revolution was an art; and it was as an artist that he comported himself when preparing for the seizure of power.

It was now the beginning of October 1917. The All-Russian Congress of Soviets had been summoned for the 25th of the month. This Congress was to decide the fateful question as to whether or not the supreme power should pass to the Soviets. Many Bolsheviks urged that, pending its assembly, no attempt to overthrow the Government should be made, but Lenin answered: "Hesitation is a crime, waiting for the Soviet Congress is a childish playing with formality, a stupid playing with formality, treachery against the Revolution. . . . The constitutional illusions and hopes placed in the Soviet Congress must be combated."

At that moment, it must be remembered, a majority of the Soviets of Petrograd and Moscow stood for the Bolsheviks, and the masses were in a state of revolutionary delirium. Lenin realized that the time had come to stake everything on a bid for power. He left Finland and ventured back to Petrograd, where he attended secret meetings of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, held from 10th to 23rd October. At one of these meetings, on October 10th, twelve leaders were present, eleven men (including Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin, and Dzerzhinsky) and one woman, Madam Kollontai, who later became the Soviet ambassador in Norway. Lenin proposed that immediate measures be taken for the organisation of insurrection. Ten voted for the resolution, two against—Kamenev and Zinoviev. But both Kamenev and Zinoviev were immediately afterwards chosen to serve on a committee elected to lead the insurrection.

On the next day, October 11th, these two men took upon themselves the responsibility of sending a letter to all the party organisations protesting against the decision in favour of immediate insurrection.

This letter said: "We are deeply convinced that to declare for the immediate armed revolution means to stake on one throw the fate of our Party—and not only that, but the fate of the Russian Revolution. . . . The prospects for our Party in the elections for the Constituent Assembly are excellent. . . . With correct tactics we can get a third or even more of the Constituent Assembly. . . . The Soviets have a strong hold on life and cannot be destroyed. The Constituent Assembly can only do its revolutionary work by relying on the help of the Soviets. A combination of Soviets and Constituent Assembly—that is the type of State construction to which we are proceeding. . . . In Russia a majority of the workmen is with us and a considerable part of the soldiers. Everything else is doubtful."

Then the letter went on to assert that "the enemy" had at his disposal great forces and that a revolt could only meet with disaster. In further support of this view, it was urged that there was no disposition among the workers or soldiers or even among the poor of Petrograd to rush into the streets



and engage in fighting. Thus at the critical moment two prominent leaders, Kamenev and Zinoviev, abandoned Lenin and declared for a Parliamentary-Soviet system of Government.

That a dual regime of this nature could not endure had been proved by an incident that occurred some little while previously. Kerensky desired to send part of the Petrograd garrison to the front. The troops were war-weary and did not wish to go. At once the Soviet suspected that the purpose was to deprive the city of its defenders, thus permitting the Germans to advance and suppress the Revolution. Already the air was filled with rumours to the effect that the Government intended to act in this manner. Thereupon the Revolutionary Committee of the Soviet intervened on behalf of the soldiers who refused to move, and the Government had ignominiously to climb down.

Lenin was still in hiding at this time, but Trotsky, who played a notable part in the affair, has since claimed it as "a victorious and decisive insurrection." To the extent that it revealed that the Government had no military support on the spot he was right; but whether the mutinous conduct of the soldiers, primarily due to disgust with the war, could be taken as an indication of a desire to put the Bolsheviks into power is another question. Naturally, the Bolsheviks made the most of the incident. But in spite of it, prominent leaders—Kamenev and Zinoviev—held to the belief that the Government could command sufficient forces to maintain itself. They did not, moreover, content themselves with the letter of protest written on October 11th under the title of "The Present Moment," which has already been quoted, but on October 18th, a week before the Revolution, they again addressed the leading party organisations, declaring that an immediate insurrection would be inadmissible and a step injurious to the proletariat and the Revolution.

Lenin at once turned on these two doubters. He called them strike-breakers, and accused them of "clamouring pessimism." "How was it possible," he asked, "to wait for a constituent assembly with hunger, ruin, and exhaustion everywhere and the Government ready to surrender



Petrograd to the Germans?" And he wound up his denunciation of his two old comrades with these words: "Heavy times! A heavy problem! Heavy treason!"

Lenin was anxious that the revolt should take place before the meeting of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets which had been fixed for October 25th. He feared lest the Government might bring up troops and take the Bolsheviks and the Soviets by surprise, in which event the All-Russian Congress of Soviets would never assemble. It was madness, he insisted, to give notice beforehand of the date on which it was intended to attempt a seizure of power. Other Bolsheviks, including Trotsky, argued that the workers knew the Party only through the Congress, and that to attempt a rising not covered by its authority would only lead to confusion. Also it was anticipated that the Government might attempt to disperse the Congress, in which event the revolt would have the advantage of taking place under the banner: "Defence of the Soviets."

But Lenin persisted in his cry: "Action, action. Power first; discussion about the Congress afterwards."

Ultimately October 15th was fixed by the Central Committee of the Party as an approximate date for the rising. In point of fact, it did not begin until two days before the All-Russian Congress of Soviets met; and when the Congress held its opening session it found itself confronted with Bolshevik power. It was never suggested that the Congress would not give a majority for the Bolsheviks; but the Bolsheviks thought it prudent to take no risks. While the last act in the drama, the capture of the Winter Palace, was proceeding Lenin was raging with impatience in the Smolny Institute—swearing, shouting, and finally crossing himself.

The moderate elements withdrew from the Soviet Congress, but the Bolsheviks extended to them an invitation to return and enter into a coalition. And again when forming their Government they invited three representatives of the left Social Revolutionaries to participate in it. Both invitations were declined. In putting them forward, the Bolsheviks say that they desired to prove their willingness to share power. Lenin was one of those who supported the

idea of coalition. This was not surprising, for he knew that the Bolsheviks had a majority in the Soviets, and for him the Soviets were everything.

So soon as they had the power in their hands the Bolsheviks formed a Council of Commissars to carry on the Government. Both Kamenev and Zinoviev were members of this Council; and Zinoviev only lately has boasted that he played a prominent part in the stirring events that resulted in a Bolshevik Government. But a few days after power had been seized, the revolutionary ardour of these two leaders again cooled; and on November 4th they took the decisive step of resigning from the Council of Commissars as well as from the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Rykov, Nogin, Miliutin and a few other prominent men joined them.

This opposition urged that, as the great majority of the workers and soldiers desired to stop bloodshed between sections of the democracy, a coalition government should be formed from all parties in the Soviet. Only such a compromise, they declared, would ensure the calling of a constituent assembly at the appointed time.

"This is the only course," they wrote, "except to form a purely Bolshevik Government by means of political terror." These words have a special significance in view of all that has since happened.

Again Lenin thundered out his denunciations. The comrades who had resigned were "deserters" and "strike-breakers"; "the mighty rising of the masses, the mighty heroism of the millions of workers and soldiers and peasants will remove these waverers as lightly as a railroad train tosses aside a chip."

A few days later, on November 7th, to be precise, "the deserters" withdrew their resignation and returned to the Government and to the Party. And it was on the evening of this day that the All-Russian Congress of Soviets met and Lenin made his first public appearance since he had been driven into hiding in July. At once he announced the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and reaffirmed his agreement with the masses by declaring for immediate peace and nationalisation of the land. The

Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries protested against the Bolshevik violation of the sovereignty of the Congress ; but the delegates, mostly simple men, charmed with Lenin's words, were in no mind to defend their own powers. Thus the rape of the Revolution was forgotten in the virtuous delirium of wedlock.

One more obstacle confronted the Bolsheviks, the Constituent Assembly. Lenin at once said : " Postpone the elections ! " But it was pointed out to him that the Bolsheviks had all along accused the Provisional Government of delaying the constituent assembly, and that the constituent assembly had a great meaning for the peasants, among whom the Soviets were little known. Lenin could not bring himself to agree with this point of view. Once the power was in his grasp he failed to see what purpose a constituent assembly could serve. " It is a mistake," he sighed. " It may cost the Revolution its head." And when he realised that voting on the existing electoral lists could not result in anything but a majority against the Bolsheviks, he said, " Naturally we must break up the Constituent Assembly." To provide the necessary force for this purpose, he ordered the transfer to Petrograd of a Lettish regiment composed of workers. " The peasants may hesitate," he said. " Proletarian decision is necessary." The Constituent Assembly was broken up ; Trotsky has since related how the little citizens from the provinces brought candles with them in case the Bolsheviks cut off the electric light, and a vast number of sandwiches in case their food was taken from them—" thus democracy, heavily armed with sandwiches and candles, entered upon its struggle with the proletarian dictatorship ! "

The conduct of Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Rykov at this period has a special interest for us, because all three men played afterwards, and still continue to play, a leading part in the Government of Soviet Russia. To put themselves right with the Party and its proletarian adherents, they have admitted that they were guilty of a grave error of judgment. But Zinoviev pleaded extenuating circumstances. He pointed, for example, to the fact that at the critical moment, when it was necessary to shift forces

from Petrograd to Moscow, the railwaymen adopted an attitude of neutrality. He claimed, therefore, that his hesitations reflected those of the workers. Again, he argued that to the last a compromise with the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries was hoped for; and that even Lenin had earlier on consented to negotiations to this end. "My only crime," concludes Zinoviev, "was to continue on the same path for a few days longer."

These excuses were plausible but unconvincing. It must be recollected that the desertion of Lenin in the final stage of the Revolution was the culmination of an opposition to him which had begun from the moment of his arrival in Petrograd from abroad. This desertion lasted only a few days, it is true; but these days covered the most critical period of the Revolution. It was not, as Lenin himself said, an accidental circumstance; it was the manifestation of a state of mind. And this state of mind was due to the belief that the Russian workers and peasants were unwilling to set up a dictatorship of their own, and fear that if the Bolsheviks seized power they would be forced to rule by methods of terror. Thus it followed that Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Rykov were in favour of coalition government on parliamentary lines. From this policy they were converted to Lenin's plan in three days, between November 4th to November 7th, and their conversion coincided with the consolidation of Lenin's influence over the Congress of the Soviets. Time has yet to prove which attitude of theirs was right, the first or the last. No one can say up to the present that their original interpretation of the situation was mistaken. Certainly their worst fears have been realised; for nine years the Government in Russia has been a government of terror. That alone is sufficient to suggest that hesitations were prudent, and that the masses were not ready to rule on their own account.

What part did Trotsky play in the Revolution? The Western world is so accustomed to the association of his name with that of Lenin that it has come to regard him as of equal historical importance. Lenin was the thinker, the strategist of the Revolution; most of the time he was in hiding and his power was exerted from behind the scenes.



Trotsky was the instrument of Lenin's brain, the commander in the field, the interpreter of the will of the Party majority. It was Trotsky who was chosen as Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, and who manipulated the Soviet in the Bolshevik interest. It was Trotsky's persuasive eloquence that quickened the revolt of the troops. When the garrison of the Peter and Paul Fortress wavered, it was Trotsky who won them over by a personal appeal. It was Trotsky who gave the authority of the Soviet for the delivery of arms to the workers from the Government arsenals. And finally it was Trotsky who led the Bolshevik faction out of the Preliminary Parliament, the summoning of which was a device of Kerensky's intended to tide over the delay in calling a constituent assembly. If Trotsky was the dynamic force of revolutionary action, Lenin was the dynamic force of the Revolution itself.

Trotsky only became a Bolshevik and an ally of Lenin after the downfall of the Imperialist *régime*, when each returned to Russia from a different end of the earth; previously, as we have seen, they had been political opponents. That Trotsky should have played so prominent a *rôle* so soon after his admission to the Party, even when allowance is made for revolutionary ferment, proves him to be a very remarkable man. Here it is impossible not to contrast his eleventh hour support of Lenin with the attitude of the old Bolsheviks who wavered at the decisive moment. Nevertheless it cannot be said that there was intellectual harmony between the two leaders. For nothing happened at the time (nor has since happened) to show that Trotsky had abandoned his theory of permanent revolution based upon the conviction that a workers' dictatorship in Russia would inevitably clash with the broad masses of the peasantry, and therefore could not sustain itself unless the workers of some other European country conquered power and went to its aid. In other words, he played a leading part in the Revolution, believing all the while that it was the prelude to the Socialist Revolution throughout Europe.

Lenin, too, held the latter view. But he differed from Trotsky in one important respect. He did not believe that the Revolution must inevitably clash with the broad masses



of the peasantry. On the contrary, he thought that it would gain the support of these masses, and would therefore be able to maintain itself in isolation from the rest of Europe. "Ten or twenty years of good relations with the peasantry in Russia," he said later, "will guarantee victory for Socialism on a world scale, even though proletarian revolutions elsewhere may be of slow growth."

We reach then this final conclusion: In 1917, the year when the Bolshevik Power was established, Lenin of all its leaders alone believed that it could endure in isolation. And no Bolshevik leader, not even Lenin himself, believed that it could be justified at all unless it had the support of the majority of the peasants and workers—that is, of the majority of the people of Russia.

It is true that some of the Bolsheviks, acting under the inspiration of Lenin, seized power behind the backs of the Congress of Soviets, but they did so with the firm belief that they were giving effect to the will of the masses, and with the knowledge that the Soviets in the two chief cities, Petrograd and Moscow, had declared for the Bolsheviks. And it could not be denied that Lenin's policy—of immediate peace and land nationalisation—did reflect the popular will; it is seriously to be doubted whether the conduct of the Bolsheviks on all other questions during the years that have elapsed has a like sanction. Certainly, they have so managed their electoral affairs as not to expose themselves to any risk of repudiation.

It remains to be said that the Bolsheviks entered upon their task with feelings of limitless optimism. At the first meetings of the Council of Commissars Lenin remarked: "Within half a year Socialism will rule and we shall be the greatest State in the world." Trotsky has explained that Lenin was accustomed to make confident prophecies of this kind. It was his method of inculcating the idea that Socialism was an immediate, not a remote goal. But Zinoviev and other leaders have since admitted that the Bolsheviks fully expected when they assumed power that their programme would be fulfilled after ten years of dictatorship. To-day they speak in terms of tens and tens of years; life has sobered them.

## CHAPTER IX

### COLLAPSE OF INDUSTRY

AN analysis of the events that followed upon the Bolshevik seizure of power in October ought to furnish answers to several important questions. In my view, these questions should be framed as follows :

What was the Bolshevik rule ? Was it a deliberately organised attempt to establish Socialism, Communism or what ?

To what extent were the Bolsheviks in control of events ?

Was failure due to the inherently unworkable nature of the system or to the chaos resulting from revolution and civil war ; in other words, did Communism have a fair trial ?

We have seen that both before and immediately after power was seized all the chief Bolshevik leaders, except Lenin and Trotsky, shrank from participation in a Government founded upon terror. What is more, they did not even believe that it was possible to establish such a Government ; the power of the bourgeoisie, so they thought, was invincible. Lenin gauged the militant mood of the masses and the feebleness of the enemy much more shrewdly. In reality there was no seizure of power. The Provisional Government had no power. It was simply a group of intelligentsia who met and talked as the intelligentsia always did, but whose debates and decisions had little relation to life. The soldiers quickly got rid of them ; as soon as they saw the bayonet, they stopped chattering and ran.

The Bolsheviks took the power ; there was no one else to take it. As far as the provinces were concerned, the change was brought about largely over the wire ; that is to say, telegrams were sent from Petrograd or Moscow announcing the transference of authority, and the provinces acquiesced.

What happened next? It must be borne in mind that everything was in chaos; the soldiers were streaming back from the front, and food was scarce. The workers wanted the factories and the peasants wanted the land.

Let us see first how industry fared. Before the Bolsheviks got into power, the idea of seizing possession of the factories had taken hold of the workers. Many factories had long been unremunerative, and were in some instances abandoned by the owners. That circumstance no doubt gave impetus to the expropriating tendencies which the Revolution had awakened in the masses, who reasoned in this simple way: How are we to live if the factories are closed and there is no work? We must seize and open them again, and then all will be well.

One of the first acts of the Bolsheviks, after coming into power, was to legalise workers' control. What else could they do if they were to stay where they were? To go against the proletarian stream, which all their life they had been urging on, was not to be thought of. And the workers, on their part, naturally felt that to remain "wage slaves" after they had carried out a victorious revolution would be absurd. The owners of the enterprises and the bourgeois specialists engaged in these enterprises—whom the workers regarded as enemies equally with the capitalists—had no desire to instruct their new masters in their job. And so things went swiftly to pieces; and a condition resembling anarchic-syndicalism prevailed. The workers in every factory were for themselves; not the least sign was visible of the united proletariat of which the Bolsheviks dreamt.

What was called nationalisation went on in a rapid and haphazard fashion. Decrees of confiscation were issued by the dozen; whenever the workers wished to be put in possession of the factories where they were employed, the Government acquiesced. Meanwhile, eccentric depreciations in the rouble were taking place. Manufacturers went bankrupt, one after another, and closed down their factories, whereupon the charge of sabotage was levelled against them, and their properties were taken from them in accordance with the slogan of the day: "Expropriate the expropriators!"

The catastrophic depreciation of the rouble caused the workers to demand more and more wages, and so pathetic was their faith in the profitableness of nationalisation that they passed resolutions urging nationalisation as a means of getting more wages.

But such nationalisation as was carried out at this period was not nationalisation, but the workers' expropriation of the separate enterprises in which they were employed. Thereafter they carried on these enterprises in a chaotic fashion without the least regard to the economy of the nation as a whole.

Lenin had no sympathy with syndicalist methods. He has related \* "that to every deputation of workers which came to him complaining that a factory was stopping work he said: 'If you desire the confiscation of your factory the decree forms are ready, and I can sign a decree at once. But tell me: Can you take over the management of the concern? Have you calculated what you can produce? Do you know the relation of your works with foreign markets?' Then it has appeared that they are inexperienced in these matters, that there is nothing about them in Bolshevik literature nor in the Menshevik either.

"The workers who base their activities on the principles of state socialism are the most successful. It is so in the tanning, textile, and sugar industries, where the workers, knowing their industry and wishing to preserve and develop it, recognise with proletarian common-sense that they are unable at present to cope with such a task and therefore allot one-third of the places to the capitalists in order to learn from them."

Lenin's attempt to restrain the masses was belated. At this period they were drunk with revolutionary emotionalism—emotionalism for which his own propaganda in earlier days was largely responsible. It was the capitalists, so they reasoned, who had taken all the profits of their labour, and who had prevented them from getting decent conditions of living. Expel the capitalists, seize and run the factories, and then there would be an abundance for everyone. Financial management and technical skill—

\* "The Chief Test of Our Time," by V. Lenin, 1918.



these things were of no account, were mere inventions of the bourgeois mind.

But what happened when chaos spread, when production came almost to a standstill, when civil war and hunger set in, when there was a famine in fuel, and there was no refuge from the terrors of the Russian winter? Thousands of workers abandoned the factories, as the capitalists had done before them, and fled to the country to seek what sustenance they could get from the soil. Thus the sabotage was not by any means all on one side.

There was no inducement for the workers to remain in the factories. A skilled worker got very little more than an unskilled worker, and this not enough to keep him from starvation. Thus equality, the first stage of Communism, came near to fulfilment in a manner such as Lenin had never dreamt of! Those workers who were left behind in the towns went to the factories because they had always been going to them; but when there they hung about all day and did nothing. And many people who had never had an industrial occupation before also went into factories under the illusion that it would enable them to live somehow.

Of what food was available the workers got preferential rations. But, in reality, there were no workers; for everyone idled his time away, and depended for subsistence upon the State, which was itself brought to a standstill. How could it be otherwise? Who had the strength or will to work, when work did not produce the barest sufficiency of food? By 1918 this amazing situation had been reached: the worker produced less value than he received. Thus the pauperisation of the whole industrial population was complete.

It is interesting to relate what Lenin thought about matters at this time. Fortunately, the material is available from which the workings of his mind may be reconstructed. He had been a consistent advocate of revolution all his life, and had never betrayed the least squeamishness regarding the methods to which he was ready to resort. But, as has been shown, he endeavoured, when it was already too late, to direct the Revolution into peaceful courses.



Later others, who originally had opposed his extremism, became far more extreme than he was, and joined forces with that section of the Party who believed that so long as there was no shrinking from the most drastic methods of compulsion, Communism could be established at once. Lenin from the outset desired that the Revolution should take the form of State Capitalism, the State being a Workers' State. It will be recalled that he expressed himself in this manner on October 20, 1917, just on the eve of the Bolshevik assumption of power, and again in April 1918, six months later. His view was based upon the following analysis: Russia is a backward country. The proletariat is in a small minority; the petty bourgeoisie (or lower middle-class) are numerically very strong. The Revolution was successful because the latter joined forces with the proletariat. But their motive in so doing was purely selfish, vindictive, and individualistic. They merely wanted to plunder the big capitalists and big landowners, and put themselves in their places. Once they had succeeded in this purpose, they parted ways with the Revolution. Thenceforth they were the real enemies of Socialism. They could not be annihilated, but they must be controlled. And the only way in which this could be done was by the building up of a strong system of State Capitalism.

In a speech reported in the *Isvestia* of May 30, 1918, Lenin made use of the following remarkable words:

"What is State Capitalism in the hands of the Soviet Power? To bring about State Capitalism at the present time means to establish that control and order formerly achieved by the propertied classes. We have in Germany an example of State Capitalism, and we know that she proved our superior. If you would only give a little thought to what the security of such State Socialism would mean in Russia, a Soviet Russia, you would recognise that only madmen whose heads are full of formulas and doctrines can deny that State Socialism is our salvation. If we possessed it in Russia the transition to complete Socialism would be easy, because State Socialism is centralisation, control, socialisation—in fact, everything that we lack. The greatest menace to us is the opportunism of the small

bourgeoisie, which, owing to the history and the economics of Russia, is the best organised class, and prevents us from taking this step, on which depends the success of Socialism.

"I wish to remind you that I wrote about State Socialism a few days before the upheaval, when a revolutionary-democratic government of Kerensky, Tchernov, Tseretelli, and others of that stamp was contemplated: a government which rested, and could only rest, on a bourgeois basis. I said then that State Capitalism is a step towards State Socialism; I wrote that on October 20, 1917, and again in April 1918 after the proletariat had assumed power in October. Many factories and workshops are confiscated, financial concerns and banks are nationalised, the resistance of the militant bourgeoisie and of those indulging in sabotage is broken. And now, after all this, to frighten us with capitalism! This is such a ludicrous and preposterous absurdity and invention that one cannot help wondering how it was possible to conceive it. They have left out of consideration a mere trifle, namely, that in Russia we have a numerous small bourgeoisie which is in favour of the extermination of the upper bourgeoisie in all countries, but is not in favour of socialisation and control at home; and in this consists the great danger for the Revolution. The small bourgeoisie permeate the social atmosphere with mean 'possessive' tendencies and aims, which can be summed up in the phrase: 'Well, I have taken from the wealthy, and the others are no concern of mine.' It is precisely this attitude which constitutes the great danger. The domination of the small bourgeoisie by the other classes and by State Capitalism should be welcomed by every class-conscious worker, because State Capitalism under Kerensky's democratic *régime* would mean a step towards Socialism, and under the Soviet Government *almost complete socialism*. . . . Socialism can only be reached by the development of State Capitalism, the careful organisation of finance, control, and discipline among the workers. Without this there can be no Socialism."

Thus seven months of chaos brought Lenin to the full realisation that the Bolsheviks, having overthrown the Capitalist order, had not the remotest idea of how to put Socialism into

practice. The old leaders, he said, had not taught them anything practical, which was greatly to their discredit. And it was perfectly true that most of the Bolsheviks had but a poor understanding of what socialism meant, and that their heads were full of chaotic and contradictory ideas. Consequently, when Lenin began to talk about state capitalism, and the need for order and discipline, they accused him of desiring to enslave the workers. Discipline, they urged, would rob the worker of his organising capacity and self-reliance. Evidently their conception of socialism was freedom for the worker not to work. And to this conception they persistently clung in spite of the ruin which they saw around them, the sole cause of which was that the worker had in fact used his freedom to abandon work.

Yet while desiring to put an end to disorder Lenin had no regrets for the past. All revolutionary acts, all expropriation and coercion of the bourgeoisie were justified, he said. It had been necessary, he continued, to break once and for all resistance to the Revolution, to show power, and render it firmly secure in the hands of the Soviet. But this was only the first step in the stupendous historical task which confronted the Bolsheviks; the next step was to organise and control production and consumption and to learn discipline from big business concerns.

"This task," Lenin now declared, changing his tune, "cannot be accomplished by any revolutionary act or the extermination of the bourgeoisie." At the same time, he urged that the Soviet Power must make use of bourgeois technical and other experts, for without them, he said, it would be impossible to maintain the culture created by the former social conditions which must serve as the material basis of the new communist society.

The period of destruction was now over; it was time for the work of reconstruction to begin.

"The path of reorganisation is a long one, and the tasks of socialist constructive work require strenuous and continuous effort, with a corresponding knowledge which we do not sufficiently possess. It is hardly to be expected that the even more developed following generation will accomplish a complete transition into Socialism."

Thus Lenin's optimism had vanished. It was no longer a question of a passage to Socialism within a few years, as at one time he had confidently anticipated, but "the path of reorganisation is a long one."

Imagine how great was the shock that these words gave to most of the Bolsheviks who had believed that so soon as the bourgeoisie were exterminated, together with all the culture of the past, communism would come of itself.

## CHAPTER X

### FAILURE OF NATIONALISATION

WE must not lose sight of the primitive idea that from the very beginning lay behind the Bolshevik experiment. Lenin alone among the leaders contemplated a system of state capitalism. It is true that he never defined very clearly what he meant by state capitalism; nevertheless it is evident that at least he had in mind a centralised system, orderly and efficient. But Lenin's idea met with little favour among the members of the Bolshevik Party, most of whom had notions of Communism that were strange and contradictory, a mixture of characteristic anarchism and naive idealism. In their simplicity they believed that events would shape themselves this wise: The workers would take over the factories and, acting under the benevolent guidance of the Communist State, would control them, not in their own interests, but in those of the Communist State. At the same time, they would not fail to work hard and willingly (far more so indeed than they had done for their capitalist masters) to produce a vast fund of material goods which they would cheerfully hand over to the Government for even distribution among the community. As for the bourgeoisie, the Bolsheviks thought of them only as incurably selfish and lazy, and were quite ready to apply the most drastic methods of compulsion to force them to work for the new order. Thus the majority of the Bolsheviks had limitless faith in the moral superiority of the worker over any other class in the community. They believed that human nature in a proletarian was totally different from human nature in a non-proletarian; that it was altogether more elevated, more selfless, more brotherly.

It may perhaps be thought singular that such sentimentality as this should have permeated a Party that prided



itself on its lack of hypocrisy and its passion for realism. But in its essence Bolshevism is a one-sided creed, its sentiment is for one class only.

Those Communists who had no illusions as to what would happen (amongst whom was Lenin) had little desire to resist the majority of their own party or the will of the masses, whose heads were turned with the notion that they had only to seize the property of the capitalists in order to get rich themselves. Their one purpose was to secure the power, and to further this they were ready to do anything to court popularity. Meanwhile, the workers, on their part, had not the least intention of considering the community as a whole, nor yet of themselves as a class. They thought only of their own individual interests, and merely co-operated among themselves in so far as it was necessary to do so in order to retain possession of the separate enterprises to which they were attached. Thus they regarded themselves as proprietors of the factories, and proceeded to distribute the products among themselves.

A year of chaos was quite sufficient to bring about the collapse of industry. On June 25th, 1918, the first measure designed to create more orderly conditions was taken. On that day a decree was issued substituting for the nationalisation of separate industries the general nationalisation of all industry; only very small enterprises employing a maximum of five with a machine, or ten without one, were exempted.

The Bolsheviks had always argued that Capitalism was a state of anarchy, Socialism a perfection of organisation. And when they secured power they acted on the assumption that the whole national economy could be made to function according to a single plan dictated by a central government department. All the processes of production and distribution down to the minutest detail were to be disciplined to the will of the State as represented by officials in Moscow. Every single individual in the land was to become the servant of the State, to do whatever the State required of him, and in return to receive from the State whatever he needed for his life. For such a plan to have succeeded either one of two things would have been essential: the

Russian people would have been a race of gods or a race of Incas. That men in their right senses having the least experience of life as it is led on this earth at present should have thought such a plan workable is amazing. It simply shows how near to insanity is the mentality of a revolutionary fanatic.

The new policy of wholesale nationalisation called for the expansion of an already swollen bureaucracy. And so the Supreme Economic Council was reorganised, and a vast department, composed of sixty central and seventy provincial branches, created.

As might have been expected, the attempt to control industry by a single plan was a failure. It is not to be denied that it was made under the most unfavourable conditions. The effects of the Civil War and blockade were calamitous; for a long time Russia found herself cut off from her principal sources of fuel and from her richest grain-producing areas. Such industry as she possessed had been devoted to the purposes of war. While struggling against external enemies, the Revolution itself was by no means united, for both the State and the workers were contending for the control of industry. As late as 1920 Rykov, then President of the Supreme Economic Council, complained of the unparalleled anarchy prevailing in industry, and said that in some enterprises there were five masters: the Factory Administration, the Factory Council, the Trades Union, the Local Executive Council and the Provincial Executive Council.

Experts were got rid of on the ground that they were loungers. Old *émigrés* who had had no experience of business, typical representatives of the intelligentsia, unskilled in anything save talking, and ordinary workers unskilled in anything save their trades, were put in charge of factories. "We appear to have built up a sort of Bohemia, a tailor is put at the head of a big metallurgical concern, a painter made to run a textile manufactory," declared M. Gastev, a trade unionist, at one of the numerous congresses held about this time.

It was not surprising that under this mismanagement the whole industrial system went speedily to ruin.

In most of the factories all calculations were wholly dispensed with; articles were produced without the least regard to cost price or to sale price. The State, on its part, also acted as if economic laws were a useless bourgeois invention. Even had the will and the capacity been there, the very nature of its policy rendered impossible the management of industry on business-like lines. Acting under the belief that it could abolish money by the simple process of printing more and more of it, the Finance Department wilfully depreciated the currency at a fantastic rate. From one moment to another no one could say what any commodity would cost to produce, or would fetch when offered for sale. The State, in short, ran industry politically, not economically. It set out with the purpose of securing as many commodities as it could, without regard to what they would cost to produce, and it ended by getting hardly any at all. At the same time, as a workers' state and from motives of self-preservation, it was bound to keep as many men employed as possible, regardless as to whether or not they were producing on an economic basis, or, for the matter of that, producing at all.

The Supreme Economic Council undertook to supply all factories, both great and small, with all that they needed, not only with raw material, fuel, and plant, but also with money and food wherewith to pay the wages of the workers. No wonder it proved quite incapable of fulfilling this colossal task. Frequently it happened that while some factories were over-supplied with non-essential commodities they were altogether lacking in others that were essential; and for long periods they had to suspend production altogether. But most of the factories ceased to be economical undertakings, for they produced far less value than they received from the State. This did not disconcert the Bolsheviks over much, for the theory was then widely held in official circles that the best way to get rid of private enterprise was to place no limits upon subsidies to nationalised undertakings.

For a long while industry survived upon stocks accumulated by the former *régime*—stocks of raw materials and of partly-finished products. Technical equipment rapidly

deteriorated, and was neither replaced nor repaired; in fact, the whole industrial system and all people connected with it—which meant almost the whole population of the towns—lived on the expenditure of capital; in other words, they became dependent on the State or, as one writer put it, recipients, not of wages, but of social relief.

In these circumstances, discipline could not be insisted upon. The workers did pretty much as they liked and lost all incentive to work. It could not well have been otherwise, for most of their day was taken up in hunting for food, and the remainder of the time was occupied in lounging about. In return, the State rewarded them with sheaves of valueless paper money and a ration which was little more than a morsel.

Every possible means that could be invented was resorted to in order to induce the workers to work harder and produce more. Both compulsory and voluntary labour were tried and both failed; the one was frank militarism, the other an appeal to the Communist section of the workers to devote their Sundays to carrying out special tasks. Human nature would neither be beaten nor cajoled. The incentive was not there—and without it the individual would not respond to the demands of the Socialist State.

Trotsky was the chief advocate of the militarisation of labour. It is of special interest at this time, when the Bolsheviks have been forced to modify their methods, to recall some of the arguments which he then employed. "We can have no Socialism," he wrote, "except by the authoritative regulation of the economic forces and resources of the country; and the centralised distribution of labour-power in harmony with the general State plan. The Labour State considers itself empowered to send every worker to the place where his work is necessary. And not one serious Socialist will begin to deny to the Labour State the right to lay its hand upon the worker who refuses to execute his labour duty. Consequently, comrades, militarisation of labour, in the root sense indicated by me, is not the invention of individual politicians or an invention of our War Department, but represents the inevitable method of organising



and disciplining of labour-power during the period of transition from Capitalism to Socialism." \*

In the towns, the bourgeoisie were set to work to cut and gather wood fuel and shovel snow. They were required to attend at the police station in the early morning, where often they were kept waiting for long hours in the bitter cold of a Russian winter. A roll was called to ensure that there were no absentees, and then, under the control of police officers, the conscripts were marched off to different places to fulfil their allotted tasks. Frequently they were taken to the countryside situated a considerable distance from the towns, where for several days at a time they were quartered in filthy barrack buildings. On the march to the place of work the young and more vigorous people got in front and made the pace and the older ones were exhausted in trying to keep up with them. These young people were the first to arrive, and consequently were able to select the easiest tasks for themselves.

Similar disorganisation characterised the drafting of large bodies of workers to different areas. In the depth of winter men were moved to districts wholly regardless as to whether or not housing accommodation was available for them, and many perished from hardship and privation.

Thus the results of wholesale nationalisation were no better than those which had attended the nationalisation of separate industrial enterprises; and the progressive ruination of the country's industry continued without interruption. By 1920 wages were 16 per cent., the number of workers employed 40 per cent., and the total production 14.5 per cent. of the pre-war total.

\* "The Defence of Terrorism," by L. Trotsky, 1921.



## CHAPTER XI

### RUIN OF AGRICULTURE

LET us see how things were getting on in the village. The peasants had always believed that their poverty was due to insufficiency of land rather than to insufficiency of knowledge as to how to get the best out of such quantity of land as they possessed. And the revolutionary parties had always encouraged them in this belief. The downfall of the old *régime* was interpreted as sanction to go and seize the property of the landowners. Of what use, the peasants reasoned in their direct primitive fashion, was a revolution if it did not permit of plunder? And of all the revolutionary groups in the field in 1917, the Bolsheviks alone encouraged this wholesale expropriation. As a consequence, they won the support of the peasants, who accounted for 85 per cent. of the population, a gain which decided the conflict for power in their favour.

They could not very well have acted otherwise if they were themselves to survive. The determination of the millions of peasants to deprive the landowners of their property had reached the dimensions of a great elemental movement. Any party that had dared to resist it would have been swept away. The Bolsheviks could not shoot down the peasants as they had shot down the bourgeoisie; there were far too many of them. For once the rule of oppressor was reversed, and it was they who terrified the Bolsheviks—terrified them by the vastness of their numbers and the primitive intensity of their passion for individual gain. But the Bolsheviks had some consolation for the sacrifice of their communistic principles in seeing the peasantry dispossess the wealthy; later, when the place of the landowner was filled by the rich peasant, it was another story.

The first act of the Bolsheviks when they became the

Government in October 1917 was to abolish all large estates, and to advise the peasants to get rid of private ownership in land. This last measure had been advocated by a large number of peasant Soviets, not from a desire to get rid of private property altogether, but only of that of their richer neighbours.

Three months later, the whole of the land was formally nationalised by decree; but the right of tilling (tantamount to a right of ownership) was granted, provided no hired labour was employed. Distribution was to be carried out in conformity with the labour or consumption norm. But frequently the peasants ignored this regulation, and acted pretty much as they liked, according to the varying conditions of each locality. Contrary to their expectations, the wholesale confiscation did not appreciably add to their possessions; in most instances the increase in their land did not exceed half a dessiatine. This was due to some extent to the fact that there were many more beneficiaries than had been anticipated: migration to Siberia had ceased since the war, and workers in urban areas, on hearing that the land was to be distributed, flocked to the country to qualify for their share, and to escape from the cruel conditions in the towns.

Thus Russia became a land populated exclusively by small-holders, and the immediate effect of the Communist revolution was that private enterprise on a large scale was abolished, and, on a small scale, perpetuated and even extended. In principle, nothing was changed; a quantitative readjustment took place; the landed proprietor disappeared, but the landed peasant remained; and individual enterprise, with all the opportunities which it gave for recreating inequalities, survived. And so the class struggle began all over again, but instead of being a struggle between the peasant and the landowner, it was a struggle between peasant and peasant—between those who were poor and those who were a little better off.

Many idealists had put their faith in the village *Mir*, or assembly, which in the old days had met to discuss village needs, and had prophesied that it would form a solid basis for a scientific communal organisation. But they were

soon disillusioned. The *Mir* was a primitive form of association having its roots in feudalism, and was quite unsuited to the needs of a revolution which aimed at the abolition of the landlord and the enrichment of the individual peasant at his expense.

The Bolsheviks, finding that they could not force Communism on the village, tried to gain their ends by less direct means. They established a number of agricultural communes up and down the country, the idea being to give practical demonstrations to the peasants of the superiority of collective over individual farming. But the peasants showed little desire to join these communes, and the enterprises were invariably disastrous economic failures. Then Soviet farms were organised. These undertakings were designed to fulfil two purposes: (1) as with the communes, to encourage collectivism; (2) to become "factories of meat and grain" for provisioning the town populations, thus rendering them independent of the country. Here again economic failure resulted.

But if they could not do as they wished with the land, the Bolsheviks sought to get their way by the manipulation of its products. The immediate problem which faced them on seizing power was to induce the peasants to give up food for the starving populations of the towns. But the peasants preferred to hide their stores of grain rather than hand them over for worthless paper money; in a word, they were complete masters of the situation. There remained nothing to be done except to organise an exchange of products of the town for those of the country. This the Bolsheviks attempted to do, and in a manner consistent with their Communist ideas. They proceeded on the assumption that not all the peasants were against them, but only the richer ones. It did not strike them that a poor peasant favoured Communism only because he was poor and desired to share in the possessions of his wealthier neighbours. With considerable effort, the Government succeeded in collecting a fund composed of stocks of goods manufactured under the old *régime*. These goods were distributed proportionately to the amount of grain collected and handed over by a community as a whole,

not according to the varying production of individual peasants who made up this community. It was then the duty of the community to divide out the goods more or less equally amongst its members, but it was understood that the poorest—that is, those who had produced the least—were to receive the most.

The scheme broke down from both sides. The towns, having an insufficient supply of manufactured goods for their own needs, held up those which the Government intended for the country, thus cutting off their own sources of food. And the richer peasants, who usually produced the most, had no incentive to grow grain for a communal contribution exchangeable for town products in which they were given so small a share. Finally, a considerable quantity of goods fell into the hands of speculators, and such products of the peasants as were forthcoming had to be paid for largely in worthless paper money.

As it proved impossible to organise an exchange of products with the country, the problem of how to get food for the towns still remained. It was a problem that had to be solved if life in the industrial centres, already at a very low ebb, was not to cease altogether. And ultimately the Bolsheviks were forced into this dilemma: either they had to admit complete failure and abandon, or at least modify, their principles, or apply rigid compulsion to the peasants.

It was the latter course that was adopted. In May 1918, some seven months after the Bolsheviks had seized power, a food dictatorship was established. It was impossible to nationalise twenty million peasant households, but the Bolsheviks attempted the next best thing, and that was to nationalise the products of these households. The peasants were allowed to retain only a minimum of corn needed for sowing and for personal consumption, and the rest was requisitioned for the State. To facilitate this measure, class war was deliberately fomented in the villages. Committees composed of the poorest peasants were set up to determine the quantities of corn to be given up and to superintend delivery. At once these committees attempted to make themselves masters of the village. Often



they seized land and cattle, which they distributed amongst themselves; and the same thing happened with the corn.

But they had no more concern for the town than the others; thus the Bolshevik idea that the poorest peasants would come to the assistance of their brother proletarians proved a delusion. What actually happened was that the village maintained a certain amount of solidarity. There was no wide margin between rich and poor such as the Bolsheviks had supposed; the hard times of the Revolution had resulted in a general level of poverty. And finally the habitual resentment of the country against the town made itself acutely felt, the belief which the peasant has never been able to get out of his head, that the townsman is a good-for-nothing fellow, a parasite who spends most of his time in pleasure-seeking and when he works makes chiefly useless articles.

The attempt to secure food by the method of class warfare in the villages having failed them, the Bolsheviks next decided to resort to naked force. Detachments of town workers, armed with machine-guns, and acting as the agents of the Trades Unions, were sent amongst the peasantry. Only in this manner was it possible to collect any considerable quantities of grain.

But the peasant soon had his revenge; he ceased altogether to produce any surplus. As far as corn was concerned, he grew no more than was needed for his own wants, and, for the rest, cultivated crops of a kind which had not been included in the requisitioning list. Thus, once again, the obstinate individualism of the peasants defeated the Bolsheviks. Rather than hand over their products to the Communist State, getting nothing in return, they preferred to go back to primitive conditions of economy, to abandon all hope of acquiring manufactured articles from the city, to produce only so much food as they needed for themselves, while depending upon the hand-loom and other primitive contrivances to supply them with necessities of life, such as clothing, implements, etc.

This attitude of the country was bound to have calamitous effects on the town; but the peasants themselves did not altogether escape its evil consequences. Famine set



in; there was a sufficiency of food for neither man nor beast; and both perished in thousands. How true it is that one cannot injure another without injuring oneself.

Scarcity led to outrageous speculation; human greed reached its zenith. Townsmen carried off to the country such household goods as were portable and bargained with the peasants for food; and many peasants brought sacks of corn to the towns and bartered the contents for various articles. By these primitive means of exchange the peasants came into possession of many things which had never before been seen in the villages, such as pianos, gramophones, pictures, and novel articles of attire, as, for instance, top-hats, silk dresses and high-heeled shoes. The peasants bargained pitilessly, and people have related to me how, hungry and humbled, they tramped from the town to the village and went from house to house, seeking purchasers of their goods. Often the peasants did not trouble to open the door to them, but merely nodded their refusal through the window. In those days a bitter feeling, memories of which still linger, grew up between town and country.

For a while life was gay and grotesque in the village. What with the loot plundered from the landlords' mansions and the goods brought by hungry townsmen in exchange for food, an atmosphere of "newly richness" prevailed everywhere. The young girls wore bracelet watches, jewels and rings, and dressed in petticoats made from furniture covers or tablecloths. Lads swanked about in green trousers cut from billiard cloths. Pianos, gramophones and mirrors appeared in many houses. But soon dilapidations set in. The pianos were converted into nest-boxes for breeding chickens. The brocaded petticoats wore out, and patches of homespun decorated the green breeches.

Later, when the peasants themselves were starving, they had to creep into the town, bringing with them the things which they had acquired in exchange for their produce when the townsmen had been in a desperate plight. And with what relish many townsmen in those days "got their own back" in the literal sense of the term!

The attempt to establish Communism by machine-guns

having failed, it might have been imagined that the Bolsheviks would re-shape their policy. It ought to have been evident to them by this time that the peasants were masters of the situation, that they were ready to destroy themselves rather than survive as slaves of the State.

But all the Bolsheviks thought of was how to administer a further dose of compulsion. The peasants had cheated them by sowing as little as possible—very well, there was nothing else to be done except to force them to sow as much as the State required, and to sow, moreover, the kind of crops which the State considered to be necessary for the community. At first a nationalisation of the whole process of agriculture was contemplated; but when it came to legislation the Government contented itself with a series of declaratory clauses, setting forth the obligation of the peasant to carry out his duty to the State and to follow the State's sowing plan. A suggestion of individual enterprise was introduced into this Socialistic scheme by the offer of premiums to the most industrious peasants.

But the socialisation of agriculture on paper had no greater success than the attempt to carry out the socialisation of its products by means of class war and machine-guns. The situation became worse. Agricultural production continued to drop until it reached 62·8 per cent. of the pre-war amount. In March 1921, Lenin, who all along had asserted that never would the Communist State retreat before the peasants, appeared before the Party Conference to advocate the abandonment of requisitioning and the substitution of a tax in kind on the peasants' production.

How, it may be asked, was it possible for any human being to survive all this while? Sorry as was the plight of the peasant, it was by no means so bad as that of the people of the towns. For it was in the towns that the Bolsheviks carried their communist experiment to its extreme end. This experiment required for its fulfilment that everyone should become the servant of the State, and be paid, not according to his production, but according to his needs. In return, the State undertook to relieve all the worries and responsibilities which hitherto had burdened his life. Housing accommodation, light, heat, education,

travelling, newspapers, amusement, all were to be provided free.

There were only two ways in which an individual could enter the employment of the State: by joining the ranks of the proletarians and working in a factory, or by securing employment in a Government office or institution, as, for example, a museum or an art gallery. Those individuals who found employment in neither one nor the other of these spheres had to exist as best they could. Although expropriation of property had been drastic, many of them had managed to retain some few personal possessions; and it was by the sale of these possessions that they were able to secure food. Those in Government employ had to resort to similar practices, for the reward which they received for their labour was no more than a mere pittance. Nevertheless, such transactions were a flagrant disobedience of the law. On all the highways leading into the towns armed pickets were stationed to prevent "bagmen" from passing to and fro—thousands of persons were arrested while on commercial errands, and were shot or imprisoned. But in spite of all attempts at suppression, a flourishing speculative trade grew up. Life proved to be more persistent than the theories of Communism. Illicit markets opened under the very eyes of the authorities; a traffic in goods was carried on by agents who specialised in secretive methods; and men and women, concealing articles under their garments, slunk about the streets trying to avoid the police on their way to seek purchasers, terrified lest their stoutness should give them away. Those were days of bitterness and disillusionment. Families were broken up; husbands deserted wives, and wives became the mistresses of Communists, sometimes creeping back again to their husbands when discarded by the men for whom their love had been no more than "food" love; often the cause of a quarrel in the home was the division of a morsel of bread. No one trusted his neighbour; families were divided; and in the majority of human beings the divine spark was extinguished and the beast resurrected. Children were neglected; soon many of them learnt all of what is called

"life"; hundreds of thousands were orphaned, and ran about like herds of wild beasts, sleeping in deserted houses or yards, and often in cemeteries. Many when captured were found to be quite *blasé*—they had undergone every vicious experience which it is possible for a human creature to undergo. In the famine areas, the peasants began to eat one another.

Suddenly everyone's true nature was exposed; it was possible to see who was noble and who was not. Some aristocrats behaved abominably; some simple people grandly. But in every calamity which befalls the human race, in every manifestation of its wickedness, the God-in-man makes His miraculous appearance. And in its darkest days the Russian Revolution was no exception. There was much heroism, much self-sacrifice. Yet on the whole human nature came terribly wounded out of the ordeal.

All the normal restraints of civilised existence broke down. The State massacred; and many of its citizens did the same; the State expropriated, and so did the individual. For a while some towns were deprived of water and sanitation; life became filthy and indecent. When fuel was scarce people were frozen to death in their homes. Houses and buildings were pulled down to secure woodwork for fuel; men crept out under cover of darkness and pulled up wooden pavements or broke up barges and boats on the river for the same purpose.

When I was in Russia recently a friend of mine, pointing to a hole in the street, said to me: "I did that. It is my hole. . . . I had to get wood from somewhere." Epidemics raged. So great was the number of people who died from starvation and disease that burials were delayed for a long while; rows upon rows of naked bodies lay piled up in the mortuaries. Everyone was ill—if not from disease, from shattered nerves; that part of the city which was not a morgue had become a madhouse. And yet all the while Lenin preached: "Come what will, we will never surrender to the peasants!"

The workmen were given first consideration in rationing; the employés in the Soviet Departments came next, and the bourgeoisie last. But at no time was anyone sufficiently



fed, not even when the State gave way a little and for a while allowed each worker to take a small part of his products in order to bargain with the peasants for a quantity of food, which was not to exceed a pound and a half; or allowed for a short period co-operative buying of monopolised food. The first measure led to a demoralisation of production, for many workers wasted a great deal of their time in these journeys to the country; while others felt aggrieved who were engaged in the manufacture of heavy products which could not very well be carried off in parts—locomotives, for instance—and exchanged for bread. Production finally fell so low that the Bolshevik leaders had to come to the conclusion that it was more practical to employ fewer men and feed them sufficiently, than a great number fed insufficiently.

How did the State itself manage to secure the necessary funds wherewith to function all this time? For mere finance, as has been shown, it had a frank contempt; finance was an invention of the bourgeoisie; and money a quite unnecessary commodity. To get rid of money at once was, of course, impossible. Before that could be done an abundance of products wherewith to replace it were needed; and instead of abundance there was a dearth.

But the workers had to be paid somehow—better to pay them in almost worthless paper money than not to pay them at all. So paper-money factories were created all over the country and printing presses set to work to print billions upon billions of notes. At the end of July 1921 the paper money in circulation amounted to 2,346,139,000,000 roubles. The Bolsheviks seriously believed that this frenzied inflation was providing them with the shortest cut to the abolition of money. And meanwhile they hoped that the situation would be saved by one of two eventualities: either industry would develop and then a great fund of goods would be created, or the World Revolution would come to their rescue. This belief in the imminence of the World Revolution was very real; once the leaders sat all night in the Kremlin waiting for news that it had begun in Germany.

Nothing, I think, illustrates more pointedly the extraordinary *naïveté*, the appalling self-assurance of the Bolsheviks than the gamble of their financial policy. Deficits in the Budget caused them no concern; in 1921 the deficit amounted to no less than 87 per cent. of the estimated expenditure. The Council of Commissars met at regular intervals and distributed the money to the various departments; what did it matter, they reasoned, if milliards instead of tens were inscribed on the notes so long as necessary articles could be purchased with them? To keep the machinery of state going the gold reserve was dispersed, and the bourgeoisie were remorselessly taxed and their property confiscated and disposed of. Both the central and the local administration resorted to forced levies payable on a class basis. Imprisonment, torture, death—all these methods were applied to exact money out of the hapless bourgeoisie. But the results were disappointing. The State called for ten milliards and set out to collect it by force; but the actual yield was only 16 per cent. of that amount. In the end, the taxes cost more to collect than they produced; and amounted to more than the total possessions of the taxpayer. The expropriator had been expropriated with a vengeance; but the State which had played the *rôle* of expropriator was no better off as a consequence. Instead, it had plunged into the most catastrophic bankruptcy which the world has ever witnessed.

Industry did not develop, the universal revolution did not come. All classes in the State were pauperised—bourgeoisie, proletariat, peasantry. Equality had been established.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE END OF COMMUNISM AND THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

THE most conspicuous characteristic of the Bolsheviks was their amazing obstinacy. How much of this was attributable to fanatical faith in their idea, how much to self-assurance which comes from ignorance and inexperience, is not easy to say. There can be no doubt that the chief leaders felt constant misgivings as to the wisdom of the course that was being pursued. It was hardly likely that men of the type of Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Rykov, who had wavered at the beginning, and who only joined the Revolution when it was definitely successful, could have been easy in their minds during the later stages, when everything was rapidly going to pieces. And from the start, Lenin, as I have shown, never dreamt of any greater achievement in the immediate future than Proletarian State Capitalism. But the rank and file of the Party belonged to the town masses, in common with whom they suffered from the revolutionary delirium prevailing at the time. Consequently, to preserve themselves, the leaders had to take their orders from below; or, as they preferred to put it, interpreted the mood of the revolutionary masses. Yet such obedience could not have been uncongenial to them, even though it called for wholesale bloodshed. Never in Russia was too great a value attached to human life, and the average Russian, even of the non-revolutionary type, has a marked inclination towards experimental courses, and is quite regardless of whither they may lead him. The Bolshevik leaders had always boasted that they were revolutionary scientists, and that if ever they got the power they would exercise it ruthlessly without heed to tradition.

The extravagant mood of the proletarian masses was

admirably suited to the purposes of their leaders; the opportunity was a rare one, for not every day does a living body come forward and obligingly place itself on the dissecting table at the service of the operating surgeon, saying at the same time, "Much obliged to you. Pray don't bother about anæsthetics."

Yet there were a few members of the Party who realised that the oppression of the peasantry was heading the Revolution straight for disaster. And one of these, M. Mestcheriakov, as far back as 1918, ten months after the Bolsheviks had assumed power, wrote: "The mass of the peasants has no idea what Socialism means, and wants only a free additional allotment of land on the principle of equality. . . . The middle and well-to-do peasants have got everything except class consciousness. Why, then, should they alter their habits and seek a new life? They are still looking upwards towards their immediate neighbours on the social ladder, the village bourgeoisie. . . . The whole village population with the exception of *kulaki* [wealthy peasants] was at one with the working class only at the very outset."

But voices such as this were drowned in the roar of the crowd. Even Lenin preached "No surrender" to the peasantry to the very end. And later, although persuaded in his own mind that repressive measures would achieve nothing, he yet acquiesced in more and more repression!

"As long as we are living in a country of small-holders," he said about this time, "Capitalism has a solidier basis than Socialism. We are weaker in the world and in Russia than Capitalism." Thenceforth he ceased all advocacy of force and counselled persuasion, agitation and propaganda. But, as I have said, he acquiesced in repression.

It was not until after the sailors in Kronstadt, who had always been affectionately regarded as the makers and defenders of the Revolution, had risen in 1921, accepting Imperialist generals as their leaders and demanding free trade for the peasantry, that the Bolsheviks changed their tune. The mutiny was quelled, it is true, but it was an



ominous portent. The army and navy in Russia are recruited chiefly from the peasantry, and a discontented peasantry meant that the military forces were not to be relied upon.

The Bolsheviks took heed of the Kronstadt danger signal. And so the great retreat from Communism began, and what came to be known as the New Economic Policy was inaugurated. For requisitioning of corn, a tax in kind was substituted, and the peasants were granted liberty to dispose of their surplus grain in a free market. At first, this afforded little relief to the situation. That the market was free was an illusion, for the peasants refused to accept worthless paper money for their products, and the State industry had hardly any goods to offer them in exchange for these products.

In order to find a way out of the difficulty, the Government gave permission to the workers to appropriate part of their production, so that there might be a possibility of procuring food from the country. And soon the factories also secured the right to dispose of their output, and to go to the open market for raw materials and fuel, the State distribution of which thus came to an end. It followed that commercial calculations had again to be made. Money which had almost become waste paper quickly revived and began to supersede barter, and a state budget on serious lines became necessary.

Rationing by a card system had to cease, and to take its place wages were introduced in the form of money and kind. The State regulated according to output the distribution of money and materials to industrial enterprises. Thus for the first time it was essential that the production of an article in a factory should bear some relation to its value on the market—in a word, each separate industry had to stand upon its own feet, and be run at a profit or close down. The beneficial effect of this policy was immediately visible.

One step led to another; and as the artificial cords which had been strangling the life of the nation gradually loosened, trade began to show signs of feeble revival. The concessions had come none too soon; not merely the whole fabric of the State and the economic structure of the nation

were in ruins, but almost every individual in the land was broken in health and spirits.

As was usual when Lenin found himself in difficulties, he resorted to an adroit and characteristic display of Russian frankness, an open-hearted confession of error that white-washed his past, and was not unreminiscent of those dramatic public repentances which in the old days won for great sinners the forgiveness of the Church, the only difference being that he spoke of "our sins," whereas they spoke of "my sins"!

"Life and all the world," he lamented, "mocked at us and at our plans!" And again: "The liberty to trade with one's own produce in the open market inevitably brings with it a division into capitalists and workers. . . . We must give back to the small-holder a stimulus and a push. . . . It is necessary to admit that we made many mistakes and many exaggerations in carrying out our policy."

To what causes did the Bolsheviks themselves attribute their failure? Trotsky said: "We have failed in our plan. Why? Because we were not sufficiently prepared for it." And Lenin added: "We have failed because of our backwardness." Speaking to the Communist Conference in 1922, he made use of some very blunt language: "We must show the peasants by our deeds that we know how to help them . . . or they will send us to the devil. The majority of them still think, 'Well, if you don't know how to help us, perhaps you will learn.' But their patience is not inexhaustible, and the moment will come when, to use a commercial expression, they will refuse us further credit and ask for cash. They will say, 'Dear rulers, after so many years of postponement have you found the right way of keeping us out of poverty, starvation, and ruin? Do you know how to do it? The Capitalists knew how to organise supply. They did it badly, they plundered and offended us. But they knew how to do it; you do not.' The simplest and most cutting criticism proffered by the peasants is: 'You may be excellent people; but you do not understand much about economics, and it is not your business to meddle with it. The Capitalist may

plunder his employes and pocket large profits, but he knows his business; whereas you, with your new-fangled ideas of no profits, Communist principles and lofty ideals, may be little short of saints, and liable to be translated to Heaven; but do you know your business? ' ' "

In the course of this speech Lenin made an admission which has an historical importance, for he said that the economic crisis had contributed far more to the failure of the Communists than all the military measures of the White Armies.

"Impoverishment, ruin, weariness, exhaustion," these were the words with which he summed up the situation at the close of the period which was known as Militant Communism, and is sometimes alluded to as "Asiatic Communism." But in spite of his confession of incompetence he uttered not one word of regret for the past.

Indeed, he said cheerily that it had been well worth while, inasmuch as it had enabled the workers to acquire invaluable experience of administration, and had led to the creation of the Proletarian Power. The country was in ruins, the masses were discontented, the victims of civil war and disease could be counted in millions—these were the totals on the one side; on the other, a single entry: Proletarian Power. As to whether or not the power so described was in reality proletarian need not again be questioned here. Naturally enough, Lenin, the dictator of the proletariat, believed that it was. But he was more frank than the Communists of lesser intelligence, for he candidly confessed that the Bolsheviks had not known their business and had blundered badly, whereas the smaller fry attributed the failure solely to the allied blockade and the civil war.

It cannot be denied that Russia did suffer very seriously from the ravages of civil war, which diverted so many of her peaceful producers to warlike occupations, and for a long while deprived her of access to regions where her main sources of oil, coal and grain supplies were located, and from the effects of a blockade quite as severe as that applied to Germany during the war. Thus it might be said that Russia was blockaded both from within and with-

out; but it was the Bolsheviks themselves who made the internal blockade so effectual; for the direct result of their policy was to bring the whole productive capacity of the nation to a standstill. Nor did the country fare better when civil war ceased and the blockade was withdrawn.

Lenin not only had no regrets for the past, but he would not admit that the idea of Communism was unattainable in the future. On the contrary, he urged that when the peasantry were industrialised by the electrification of agriculture, and when industry in the towns was rebuilt upon a scientific basis, then the fulfilment of the Communist ideal would be possible. This conclusion was consistent with the view which he had often expressed, that a Communist Revolution in Russia would be easier to begin and harder to maintain in a backward country like Russia, and harder to begin but easier to maintain in an advanced country like England, where four-fifths of the population were industrial in occupation. Henceforth Lenin substituted the vision of electrification for that of Communism; but as electrification no more than Communism is realisable in a day, the millennium, which at one time he believed to be so near, had to be indefinitely postponed.

The most important question of all remains to be asked: "Did Communism in Russia fail because, as Lenin said, the people were backward and the Bolsheviks had no knowledge of business and economics, or did it fail because it is a theory which violates the fundamental laws of human survival? In other words, is individualism the main source of human progress or is it not? And is Socialism nothing more or less than a delirious fantasy, a beautiful dream of a sick man which creates a worse hell on earth than the one we already know, when efforts are made to translate it into real life?

When in Moscow (amidst circumstances of great secrecy) I discussed these points on a number of occasions with groups of intelligent men and women, all opponents of the Soviet *régime*.

"Don't believe," they said, "that Communism failed because the Bolsheviks were bad managers, or because the



Russian people were backward. The Bolsheviks were splendid organisers, and what is more, were ruthless organisers. Human nature, not the backwardness of the Russian people, beat them."

I began to say something. At once I was interrupted—"Don't have illusions!" they exclaimed. "Don't think you could manage better in the West. You couldn't."

"Perhaps we could," I said timorously.

They laughed bitterly. "You think so?" they said, and added: "But *we* know."

"But what happened in Russia was not Communism," I observed.

"It happened because Communism cannot be," came the answer.

"There, I told you," said one of those present eagerly. "They've learned nothing in the West from our Revolution—nothing at all. It's true people have to go through their own experiences; other people's are no use to them."

"At any rate, it's interesting," I observed later (perhaps a little foolishly), to break an interval of silence.

"Yes, for you—to come and look at us for a while—and go away. But for us——!"

"Yet I would not join the *émigrés*," remarked one, and then another said the same thing—and a third and a fourth, and a fifth, who added: "Having seen so much, I want to see the end of it all."

"Something will come out of it," exclaimed another.

And most people with whom I spoke afterwards in Russia said much the same thing.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HISTORICAL PARALLELS TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

To find an appropriate parallel to the first few years of the Bolshevik Revolution one ought to go back, not to the French Revolution, not to the Paris Commune, but to China of the eleventh century. At that period social and political problems occupied the minds of the Chinese. Commerce, handicrafts, and even agriculture, the staple industry, were abandoned for polemical agitation. Pamphlets, placards, and inflammatory writings were widely circulated. The chief of the Socialist Party was Wang-Ngan-Ché, a man of genius. In his youth he studied diligently, as a consequence of which he won high academical honours. He was a gifted orator; and his private life was without blemish. But he was obstinate, haughty, and self-willed. His one desire (as Lenin later desired) was to uproot and destroy the old institutions of his country, and to replace them with new ones of his own invention. To accomplish this purpose he re-wrote the classical and sacred writings and insinuated his own opinions into them, and composed a universal dictionary in which he gave to certain words an arbitrary meaning according to his own aims.

In the year 1069 several provinces were visited by terrible disasters, earthquakes, epidemics, and droughts. Wang-Ngan-Ché was consulted by the Emperor Chen-Tsonng as to what should be done. "The first and most essential duty of a Government," said the Chinese Socialist, "is to love the people and to procure for them the real advantages of life, which are plenty and pleasure. To accomplish this object it would suffice to inspire everyone with the unvarying principles of rectitude, but as all might not observe them, the State should explain the manner of following these precepts, and enforce obedience by wise

and inflexible laws. In order to prevent the oppression of man by man, the State should take possession of all the resources of the Empire and become the sole master and employer. The State should take the entire management of commerce, industry and agriculture into its own hands with the purpose of succouring the working classes and preventing their being ground to dust."

To give effect to this policy, Wang-Ngan-Ché proposed that tribunals should be established throughout the Empire in order to fix the prices of provisions and merchandise. For a certain number of years taxes were to be imposed from which the poor should be exempt. The sum thus collected was to be reserved in the coffers of the State, to be distributed to aged paupers, to workmen out of employment and to whomsoever should be judged to stand in most need of assistance.

"It is evident," said the supporters of the scheme, "that by these means abundance and happiness will reign throughout the land. The only people who can suffer by this state of things are the usurers and the monopolists, who never fail to profit by famine and all public calamities to enrich themselves. . . . Does not justice require that they shall be forced to restitute their ill-gotten gains? . . . The State will be the only creditor, and will never take interest. . . . The necessities of life will always be sold at a moderate price. There will no longer be any classes in want, and the State, being the only speculator, will realise enormous profits annually, to be applied to works of public utility."

This radical reform involved the destruction of large fortunes and the reduction of all classes to a uniform condition. The Emperor consented and the social revolution began. Whereupon Sse-ma-Konang, a Conservative statesman and powerful adversary of the Socialist leader, addressed a last petition to the Emperor, from which the following extracts may be quoted:

"It is proposed to advance to the people the seed with which they are to sow the ground. At the end of winter or in the beginning of spring, the officers will gratuitously supply each man with the quantity considered to be neces-

sary. Immediately after the gathering of the harvest, the same quantity and no more will be demanded back. What can be more advantageous to the people? By this means all lands will be cultivated, and abundance will reign throughout the provinces of the Empire.

"In theory nothing can be more attractive and beneficial, in practice nothing more injurious to the country. We will suppose the grain distributed, and eagerly received by the people (though on this point I have much doubt); do they really make the use of it for which it is destined? Whoever believes this must have very little experience, and judge far too favourably of the common order of men. The interest of the moment is what concerns them most; the greater part never look beyond the day, and very few indeed trouble their heads about the future.

"The seed then is entrusted to them, and they begin by consuming part, they sell or exchange it for something which they imagine they need more than anything else. Corn has been given them; they leave off working and become idle. But supposing all this does not happen: the grain is sown, all the necessary labours of cultivation are properly performed, the time of gathering the crop arrives, and they are called upon to repay what was lent them. The harvest which they have watched as it grew and ripened, and have regarded as their own property, the well-earned fruit of their labours, must now be divided. Part must be yielded up, or sometimes, in bad seasons, the whole crop. How many reasons will be alleged for refusing to do this! How many real and imaginary necessities will stand in the way of the restitution!

"The tribunals, we shall be answered, which are established expressly for this department, will dispatch their satellites to enforce the payment of what is due. Doubtless; and here under the pretext of demanding what is due, what extortion, what robbery and violence will be committed. I do not mention the enormous cost which such establishments would entail; but, after all, at whose expense should they be maintained? At the expense of the Government, the nation or the farmers? Whichever it may be, who will derive advantage from it?"



To which Wang-Ngan-Ché made reply to the Emperor :  
“Beginnings are always difficult, and it is only after overcoming many obstacles that a man can hope to reap the fruits of his labour. Be firm, and all will go well. Ministers, nobles and mandarins have all risen against me. I am not surprised at it; they cannot quit the common routine and adopt new customs. Little by little they will grow used to these innovations, then natural aversion will die away of its own accord, and they will end by applauding what they are now so eager to decry.”

Chinese historians record that the revolution was a failure, and that the country was more deeply plunged in misery than before. Everything was overturned.

When the Emperor died Wang-Ngan-Ché was at once deposed, and his rival, the Conservative statesman, Sse-ma-Konang, was restored to power by the Empress. Both statesmen died during her reign. But later, when she herself passed from the scene, the partisans of Wang-Ngan-Ché regained their influence and restored his system. The tomb of Sse-ma-Konang was destroyed and in its place was put another, bearing a denunciation of his alleged crimes against the people. But three years afterwards he was restored to honour, the Socialist Party was proscribed, and its members were forced to flee the country. They passed the Great Wall in large bodies, and, wandering about the deserts of Tartary, led a wild existence, plundering and assassinating. Soon they communicated their revolutionary spirit to the Mongols, who were renowned for their fierceness.

This combination—a combination of primitive Socialists and primitive savages—had appalling results. The whole of Tartary was set aflame with a passion for revolutionary upheaval. It was then that Genghis Khan appeared on the scene. The great westward invasion of the Tartars was the consequence.

Wang-Ngan-Ché may be compared with Lenin. His character and his ideas bore a close resemblance to those of Lenin. And the system set up in China eight centuries

ago was almost identical with that forced upon the Russian masses in the first few years of the Bolshevik Revolution. The conditions brought about by this system were, moreover, much the same as those which followed upon the Socialist experiment in China. On a number of occasions the Soviet State distributed seed grain to the peasants; this seed grain was eaten and not sown by the peasants. Tribunals, supported by armed men, were sent into the country to take from the peasants all that they produced save a bare sufficiency wherewith to maintain themselves. Extortion, robbery and violence resulted. Soon the peasants left off working and preferred to starve themselves rather than give food to the towns and get nothing in exchange.

Many other parallels to the early days of the Bolshevik Revolution may be cited from ancient history, but one recently brought to light—the state of Egypt 4000 years ago—is, I think, particularly appropriate. It is perhaps less exact than the example of China which I have quoted, but it is of special interest inasmuch as it corrects the notion generally held that Egypt was a land where everything was regulated smoothly according to custom and tradition, and where sudden and violent changes were unknown. From papyri and other archæological documents we learn that between the 6th and 11th dynasties (2360 and 2160 B.C.) the state of Egypt resembled that of Russia in the early days of the Revolution. The economic foundations of the country were shaken, property was redivided and pillaged, all title deeds were destroyed and the laws trampled under foot. Officials were freely murdered. The cry “Expropriate the expropriators” was heard for the first time. The aristocracy were humiliated, and the plebeians rejoiced, saying, “It is necessary to pull down those who sit in high places.” The children of princes were beaten on the walls, citizens were forced to labour in the mills, serfs became owners of serfs, people appeared on the streets who had never seen daylight before, and men plundered the food supplies saying, “I come, I take.” All people were criminals, brother killed brother, the population ate grass, and the Nile was

converted into a grave. Only death was active, no one cried at funerals, laughter was morbid, tyrants ruled and civil war was unceasing. It was not until the 12th dynasty that anarchy was suppressed, and order restored by the introduction of democratic reforms.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE TERROR IN LIFE

THE Government of Russia to-day is not, as the Bolsheviks assert, a dictatorship of the proletariat, nor is it, as some people say, a dictatorship of the Communist Party on behalf of the proletariat. It is simply a dictatorship exercised by a small group of men, all of whom are old professional revolutionaries whose sympathies incline towards the proletariat. How, it may be asked, did the dictatorship come to be established? How was the Constitution set aside? And how, that being done, was the Communist Party reduced to a state of servility?

There is only one answer; all these ends were attained by the pressure of the terror. A dictatorship is the form of government in Soviet Russia, and terror is the instrument by which it maintains itself. If I were asked to say what as a result of my visit to Russia impressed me most, I would answer, the evil atmosphere everywhere and at all times felt as a consequence of this terror. No one, who has not actually encountered it, can understand how sinister, how depressing it is. In the Tsar's time, things were bad enough; but the oppressiveness of the Bolshevik *régime* is incomparably worse. And it has lasted for nine years—imagine nine years of the most tyrannical period of the French Revolution or, to take an example which the Bolsheviks themselves say is the nearest parallel to their own *régime*, the Paris Commune.

Can it be wondered that the Russian people are cowed, broken, and demoralised? Always inclined to morbidity as a consequence of sufferings in the past and the influences of lonely limitless spaces and long, ghostly winters, the horrors of the Revolution completely shattered their nerves. To-day Russia is one vast madhouse. The terror is life: never for a moment is it absent from the mind. Nothing



I could say regarding the Soviet rule, or the condition of the people condemned to endure it, would be intelligible unless I should first describe the appalling, the unimaginable condition which this never-ending nightmare has produced. Once that is done, everything that I have to say concerning Russia, no matter how strange it may seem, will, I think, be understood.

First impressions of Russia are not to be trusted. Superficially regarded, life is not so abnormal, so curious, as one had been led to suppose. Take Moscow, for example. Life on the surface continues much as it does in any great city. At the stations trains arrive and depart fairly punctually; shops, restaurants, places of amusement and public baths are open; trams are running, cabs and automobiles ply for hire in the street; public gardens in the centre are regularly watered and tended; clean bedrooms, to which a hot water supply is laid on, are procurable at the State Hotel; the postal and telephone services work as well as (if not better than) do those of any great European city; a directory of citizens has been compiled, and one may hang up one's coat in the hall of an hotel or restaurant without fear of it being stolen. And yet reminders of the Revolution constantly meet the eye of the newcomer; red flags, red soldiers, the eternal emblem of the hammer and the sickle, portraits of Lenin and Trotsky, processions of workers marching behind red banners to the accompaniment of revolutionary music; and, for the rest, ill-paved streets, shabby-looking buildings and not a few ruins. But none of these sights conflicted with one's first impression; the terror of the Revolution, it seemed, had passed. I was almost tempted to think that perhaps when it existed it had been much exaggerated. But I had not been long in Moscow before I began to feel a sultriness in the atmosphere.

One of my fellow-travellers from Riga was a young American banker, a typical business man of a lively, optimistic temperament. Like myself, he was surprised to find life functioning so smoothly in Moscow. Our first act was to visit the public baths. With some hesitation my companion handed over to the attendant a packet con-

taining five thousand dollars, for which, according to custom, no receipt was given.

"Don't trouble yourself," said the man. "We have thousands upon thousands of dollars here."

When the American got back his money he was enthusiastic over the honesty of new Russia.

That same night we went to a cinema on the Tverskaya, the principal street of the city.

The play shown was Andreev's "The Seven That Were Hanged"! It was done very realistically; the sufferings and exaltation of the five terrorists; the imbecility and anguish of the peasant Ivan Yanson, muttering to the last "I must not be hanged," and the bravado of the brigand, Mishka, the Tzigane.

They were hanged in pairs, Werner, the man of will, fatigued by struggle, who had loved the theatre, society, art, and literature, passionately chose as his companion the peasant Yanson, who had to be dragged to the scaffold. And the young woman, Musya, the most inspired of all the martyrs, went to the brigand.

"I am left alone," said Tanya. And she sighed. "Sergey is dead, Werner and Vasily are dead. And Musya is dying. Soldiers, my little soldiers, you see I am alone, alone. . . . They placed the bodies in boxes, and started off. With elongated necks, bulging eyes, and blue tongues protruding from their mouths, the dead retraced the road by which the living had come. . . . And the snow was still soft, and the air of the forest was still pure and balmy."

My American companion could not see the play through. His face twitched and he tugged at my sleeve. Once he uttered a cry and many people turned and looked at him. . . . "I can't stand it. . . . It's terrible," he repeated several times in a loud voice. And before the film ended—just at the point where the executions had begun (two bodies over which a linen bag had been put were already swinging on the scaffold) he got up and walked quietly out.

Afterwards I said to him: "If you keep in mind 'The Seven That Were Hanged,' you'll understand much in Russia."

"My God!" he ejaculated. "We never put on films like that in America. . . . We couldn't stand it!"

A few days later I met my American acquaintance again in the street. Before I could ask him how he was getting on he blurted out: "I shan't be here long. I can't bear the atmosphere. . . . I don't know what's the matter with it. But I can't stand it. It depresses me. If I stay much longer I'll go clean mad."

His face was pale. He was no longer the alert little business man whom I had met in the train. He had become a nervous wreck.

"Look at all these people in the streets—how miserable they are," he went on, waving his hand.

I glanced at the sombre crowd of people dressed in shabby clothes. It was true; they looked miserable.

And then I glanced at the little American in front of me neatly dressed in clothes of fresh-looking black and white checks.

"A bourgeois if ever there was one!" I thought to myself maliciously.

"I don't know what's the matter with it," he continued, "but it's all wrong. I'm sure of that. . . . Why, the Government is everything! You can't move, you can't breathe without the permission of the Government."

And he was right. The atmosphere was sinister. What caused it to be so neither of us could then say. We had not been in Moscow long enough to get even a superficial understanding of the situation.

My American acquaintance invited me to a little café in the Petrovka, a street off the Tverskaya, a resort (so it turned out) of all the despondent *flâneurs* of Moscow. Here the coffee was of the first quality and moderately priced; the same must be said of the delicious pastries, which for richness and variety, as well as for fancifulness of shape, rivalled the pastries of old Russia, which is saying a great deal.

Two days later the little American packed up and left Russia. On taking leave of me he said, "It's no use opening a bank here; no one has any money."

For a while I was preoccupied with the unusualness of

the environment—the environment of revolution—and was conscious only of atmosphere—an atmosphere so strange as to be unlike anything I had felt before, and one which, I imagine, could only be paralleled in another planet.

But as time went on, and I was brought into closer touch with the realities of life in Soviet Russia, I began to understand how it was that this atmosphere existed.

I was particularly well equipped for getting an insight into real conditions in Russia; for I had many relations and friends living in the country and, in addition, had brought with me many letters of recommendation to Russians of both classes—the ruling and the ruled.

I soon found that the majority of people behaved in a quite abnormal manner. Many whom I visited seemed rather embarrassed by my appearance. Not a few even betrayed signs of distress on these occasions. And when, as sometimes happened, I was accompanied by a Russian friend the proceedings were a mixture of pathos and farce. To all my questions, vague and diplomatic answers were returned.

“How were things?”

“Bad—but not so bad as before. They have been worse. You should have been here in 1921–2.”

“Are the Bolsheviki still arresting and shooting many people?”

“Less now.” . . . And a shrug of the shoulders.

“How about education?”

“There are schools and some are not bad . . . one lives.”

And so forth. One grew tired of these non-committal answers.

To some houses, where it was clear to me that my presence caused panic, I paid no second visit. To those where I could feel I was not altogether unwelcome I went again, but unaccompanied.

“Who was that Russian you brought with you last time?” I was invariably asked.

And before I could have time to answer I was warned that he was a spy, an agent of the Cheka. It was useless to protest that I knew that he was not.



"You don't know anything," said my acquaintances. "Everyone who goes about openly with a foreigner is a spy. He must be a spy, otherwise he wouldn't be seen with you."

And then these same people who had replied to my questions so carefully before would deliver themselves of a long denunciation of the Bolshevik *régime*. "Life it is true is better, much better, than it was in 1921-2. But it isn't life. It's a nightmare. No money. . . . And searches and arrests are going on all the time. . . . The scum is on top."

One day I was dining with a Russian friend in a restaurant in Moscow, the same friend who had been regarded as a spy by other Russians whom we had visited together.

I happened to remark that the face of a Bolshevik leader, whose portrait hung upon the wall, was not particularly handsome. It was Trotsky's face, as a matter of fact.

"Hush!" he said. "You might get into trouble."

"One cannot say a Commissar is ugly!" I exclaimed in astonishment.

"It is better to be careful. . . . One never knows who one's neighbour is," he remarked.

I noticed that all the people in the restaurant bent across the table and spoke in an undertone one to another. I soon understood that it was the manner in Soviet Russia to lower the voice when conversing in a public place.

Afterwards my friend begged me not to speak of politics in a restaurant. "It might get me into trouble," he said.

Among the letters of introduction which I had taken with me was one addressed to a professor in Leningrad, a man whose name, I may add, is known the world over. He accepted an invitation to visit me in my rooms at the hotel. But he declined to dine with me. "It is wiser for us not to be seen together in public," he said.

At the appointed hour the door of my room opened, the professor jumped in with one leap ("jumped" is a true description of his acrobatics), and then banged the door behind him. He was almost breathless.

"I came straight up. The hall porter did not see me

... there was no one in the corridor," he exclaimed breathlessly.

As he left I said, "I have your number; I will 'phone you—or perhaps you will 'phone me."

"No—don't use the telephone. It's dangerous. Many people have been arrested because of conversations on the telephone—and particularly with a foreigner," he replied. I bade him good-night in the room.

Another friend came to see me in my hotel; the name of the town in which this little incident occurred does not matter. We were talking rather freely when suddenly my friend glanced up and caught sight of a little round hole in the wall near the ceiling. A look of apprehension came over his face.

"For ventilation," I said.

"G.P.U.,"\* he answered, whereupon the expression on his face assumed a studied significance. How often was I to hear those letters repeated during my stay in Soviet Russia!

"But how——?"

I had intended to ask how it was possible to overhear anything through so small an aperture.

"Microphone!" he remarked laughingly. But despite his little joke he was alarmed, and at once brought his visit to an end.

Both in Moscow and Leningrad the principal hotels are owned and managed by the State. In Leningrad I found that the conditions were far more oppressive than in Moscow. In Leningrad everyone is afraid to do anything that might not meet with the approval of Moscow, the seat of authority.

When there I stayed at the Hôtel Europe, a hotel which before the Revolution was numbered amongst the most luxurious hotels in the world. People fought shy of visiting me.

"Don't you know," they said, "that the Europe is kept by the Cheka?"

"A very comfortable prison," I replied.

"But the whole of Leningrad is a prison."

The hotel, like every other building, suffered damage

\* Initials of Secret Police Department.

during the Revolution. It has been renovated to some extent, but still shows signs of shabbiness. Nevertheless it is the most imposing and comfortable hotel in Russia.

Besides myself there are only two other guests in the hotel; one can wander up and down the marble staircase over which swaggering officers in the Tsar's time loved to bedraggle their swords, and along the crimson-carpeted corridors, without meeting with a soul. On the first landing one's attention is arrested by a couple of show-cases lit with electric light, in which are exhibited some fanciful examples of lingerie. These cases stand at the entrance to the marble room where there is a zakouski-counter on which are displayed caviare, Russian salads and sandwiches. Everything is there as it used to be in the old days—except the people. And downstairs it is the same as upstairs. The bar where the young bloods of St. Petersburg used to sip their *apéritifs* is closed; the billiard table is covered with a white cloth. And the long marble room adjoining, where people of all sorts once took five o'clock tea while the orchestra played, is empty and silent. If one coughs, an echo is heard. . . . Sometimes it happens that there are a few people in the hotel, first one drops in and then another. But I never saw more than half a dozen at a time during the whole of my stay. Those who happen to be there eye one another suspiciously. And the porters and the waiters also regard the guests with evident distrust. Conversations are carried on in a low voice. A smiling (or even a pleasant) face is never seen. No one behaves like a normal human being. One feels that one is living in a home of conspirators—or a madhouse.

And whenever one speaks to anyone about the hotel it is only to hear a recital of arrests and tragedies that have taken place within its walls. At night the strangeness and loneliness of the place are even more disturbing. The porter looks at you very hard as he hands you your key. You imagine that he knows that you have been consorting with the bourgeoisie; and how guilty you feel! As you pass along the corridor to your room the night waiters get

up and bow. And one of them raises his hand and salutes. You are quite certain that they are mocking you. . . . One makes sure that the door is locked. And then one goes to bed between sheets that bear the Emperor's monogram—part of the loot of the Revolution from the Winter Palace.

So timid are some people that they will not be seen with a foreigner in the centre of a town. On several occasions I was told: "Meet me at such and such a place (for example, the opera house or the railway station). Don't come up to me at once, but follow at a distance until we get to a quiet spot. Then I will give the signal, and you can come to me."

The few foreigners whom I met complained to me that existence in Soviet Russia was intolerable. "There is no social life," they said. "No Russian dares to be seen with us. . . . We hang about the hotel and the streets all day—and never make friends with anyone."

The Foreign Legations and missions are completely isolated. A Russian who frequents any one of them runs the risk of arrest and imprisonment.

One afternoon I was present at a little gathering at one of the foreign missions. Several diplomatists from other missions were there, and three Russians, one accompanied by his wife.

"I am surprised that my Russian friends have had the courage to turn up," said my host. "At one time more Russians used to visit me, but gradually they dropped out one by one, and I rarely see any now."

The three Russians were men whose names stood high in intellectual circles the world over. They wore morning coats, and their appearance was as polished as their manners.

How strange was the contrast of this Western drawing-room scene with the shabby Asiatic aspect of most things in Russia!

We listened to some music, and then discussed art and the theatre after the conventional drawing-room fashion, strained and superficial. But soon conversation turned, as



it usually does in Soviet Russia, to talk of spies, arrests and the G.P.U.

Nearly everyone whom one meets belonging to the bourgeois class has been in prison or has an acquaintance who has just been arrested. Wherever a few gather together it is the custom to recount experiences and to tell the latest news as to who has been arrested and who has been released. Frequently one heard this sort of thing: "They came to us late at night (it is always "they") and searched our lodging. But, of course, they found nothing. We are not conspirators. Our servant was splendid. . . . A simple peasant. She spat at the Red Guards and called them names to their faces. . . . We were not badly treated in prison. . . . It was dirty . . . lice . . . ugh! But they weren't bad. I must say that," or "I was just getting up and hadn't a stitch on me (it is a woman who is speaking). They forced their way into my bedroom. . . . I threw a blanket over me—that was all. They thought I'd been hiding valuables."

And so the conversation went on with interludes of music, tea and pastries.

One of those present (the diplomatic representative of one of the Baltic States) mentioned that he had sent a present to a Russian friend whom he had known for years. But he had received no acknowledgment. "She is afraid," he said, "even to communicate her thanks to me."

Soon a tall, elderly woman entered, an ex-Grand Duchess, who, I was told, had been picked up "out of the gutter"—or snatched from death by some foreigner, and nursed back to health again. She abused the Bolsheviks.

Afterwards when the guests had gone and we were alone, my host, looking puzzled, remarked: "To tell the truth, I'm not sure of that woman. Everyone says she's in the employ of the G.P.U. Why she comes here I don't know." After a pause he added: "But how is one to know? Everyone says that everyone else is in the G.P.U. . . . Perhaps they're right. . . . What a country!"

And now for the sequel. The fate of the three Russians present on that day was as follows:

One went on a visit to a neutral country. There, think-

ing that at last he was breathing free air, he wrote a letter to a relative who lived in this neutral country. In the letter he expressed without restraint what he thought of the Bolsheviks. On returning to Russia he was arrested at the frontier.

"What am I charged with?" he asked.

At once he was confronted with a copy of the letter which he had written to his relative when abroad. . . . Later he committed suicide in prison by hanging himself.

The second Russian, reduced to starvation, sold some pictures from his collection which were conveyed to Germany by aeroplane, a clear offence against the law. He was arrested and went mad in prison.

The third Russian was murdered.

And things are no better in the provinces. During my stay in Russia I took a voyage down the Volga. At one town, where the boat stayed for a little while, a party of children came to see another party off; the latter were going on a little journey up-river to make their first acquaintance with some village children to whom they had been writing letters.

These town children were orphans, mostly waifs and strays salvaged from the Revolution. They looked sunburnt, clean and healthy. The Bolsheviks run schools on communal self-government lines for the orphans of the Revolution, and a few of them are admirable institutions. But, of course, each little child is moulded into a complete Bolshevik.

While the boat was waiting both parties of children sang in chorus a pathetic song about the heroic Paris Communards—how the poor soldiers had to fire on them, and could not therefore be blamed. What a funny picture, these Russian mites solemnly singing the praises of Paris Communards! A passion for revolution is the patriotism of Soviet Russia.

While the singing was in progress two men sidled up to me. One, a seedy-looking individual (who turned out to be a Moscow merchant, banished to the provinces for speculation), remarked: "Bah! They've got to sing that.

"They don't know what it means." The other proved to be a student, who had just been turned out of a university because he was of the bourgeois class. He began to pour out his troubles to me.

Someone said, "Hush! You will be overheard. There is a Communist over there."

"Where?" asked the student.

"Over there!"

Not far away a man with Tartar features was leaning against the rails of the ship. It was evident from his appearance that he was a working man.

"Who is he?" I asked in a whisper.

"The chief director of the Tobacco Trust," replied the student.

As soon as the people in the vicinity heard the speculator and the student complaining against the Government they vanished one by one. I was anxious to converse with the student. We wandered about the ship, looking for a quiet place, but wherever we rested some individual whom he regarded with suspicion came near to us and we had to move elsewhere. At one time another student—a friend evidently of my new acquaintance—came up, and the following conversation took place:

First Student: "They tell lies. There was a lot of room in the university. They simply got rid of us because we are of the merchant class. One day I was asked all sorts of questions about my father's origin and affairs, and the next I was sent away. And I had nearly finished my education, too. What am I to do? I've no certificate. . . . I can't be a specialist of any kind . . . and one can't do business in Russia. If I could only emigrate. . . ."

Second Student: "What is the use of that? I know a Russian university professor abroad who is a hall porter."

First Student: "Better that and have freedom."

Then a "suspicious person" approached. We glanced at one another, and went off in different directions.

I not only visited the Volga region, but journeyed south as far as Kiev. Wherever I went I encountered the same poisonous atmosphere of distrust. Some people would make appointments and fail to keep them, others would

frankly say that they did not desire to be seen with foreigners.

At Yaroslavl, for example, I had an extraordinary experience. I arrived there very late at night. There was no room in any of the hotels; a conference was taking place to discuss local industrial affairs and the delegates had occupied all the available room. The principal hotel had been taken over by the State and was called a Communal Hotel. Here, through the glass window of the dining-room, I could see the sleeping delegates stretched out on tables. Another hotel which I visited was a private hotel. There I wandered about the corridors freely, but was unable to find a soul. The doors had been left open for strangers to enter; but the whole staff had fled to sleep.

And so there was nothing else to be done except to saunter round the boulevards.

It was daylight; already the sun was shining on the golden domes of the churches and monasteries, and streaming through the ruins of the Revolution. But it was still cool, and the air was fresh and scented with blossom.

As morning came the peasants began to troop into the town.

"How's life?" I asked one or two of them.

"Couldn't be worse," was the answer.

Later, I met an acquaintance and about six o'clock we went together in search of a restaurant. Soon we came across one, at a corner not far from the State Hotel. Standing outside was a Madonna-faced woman, dressed very shabbily with a shawl over her head.

She told me that she was an Italian. I could see that she was delighted to meet with another foreigner.

"I have been summoned here," she said, "to be examined by the G.P.U. My husband was conscripted by the White Guards. He could not help it. He had to go. And then he was captured by the Bolsheviks, and was ordered to live under surveillance at —; but there was nothing for him to do there. And so we starved. . . . All our relations were abroad. One day we happened to get three letters by the same post from them. . . . And our house was at once searched and he was arrested. . . .



That was three months ago and he is still in prison. And now I'm to be examined."

While this conversation was taking place my acquaintance moved some distance away.

"What is the matter?" I asked of him.

"I don't want to be mixed up in such an affair," he said.

She begged that I would meet her later on, so that she could communicate to me the result of her encounter with the G.P.U., and news of her husband, all of which information she requested I should write to her mother in Italy.

I had to leave Yaroslavl immediately, but as I was returning later I suggested to my acquaintance (who was a resident of the town) that perhaps he would see her and get whatever news she had to convey to me.

He declined: "I don't want to be suspected of being a counter-revolutionary," he said.

"But who's to know?" I asked.

"When she leaves the G.P.U. she'll be followed," he said.

I felt disgusted. . . . In the restaurant he would not sit at the same table with her.

Afterwards, when the town was awake, I returned to the State or Communal Hotel. The manager, a good representative of the working classes, solid-looking and kindly-natured, received me warmly. "Tell the British proletariat," he said, "that Russia is free and happy and that we are in unity with them."

I found that I could not get a wash in the bedroom. There was no washstand, no jug, no basin—nothing.

"Anything that can be carried away is stolen," explained the waiter. . . . And this at once reminded me of my experience on the Volga boats, where I could not have electric light in the cabin until I had first deposited the price of the bulb with the steward.

Never for a moment during the whole of my stay in Russia could I escape from the stifling atmosphere of distrust. It was present wherever I went, in the monasteries particularly, while I met with it even in remote villages. These experiences must be reserved for separate chapters,

describing the condition of the Church and of the peasantry.

But even in Russia, where the practice of political caution has reached the perfection of an art, it is impossible to be on one's guard every minute of the day. Russians are temperamental and inclined to be outspoken. It happens that some of them let drop abusive remarks about the Bolsheviks. These are overheard by unfriendly ears, with the result that arrest follows. There is much denunciation going on; life is hard; and the temptation to turn informer in order to curry favour with the ruling classes, or to obtain the release of a relative, is very great. Suspicion has penetrated into family life itself; *émigrés* living abroad who have completely lost touch with the country often write indiscreet letters to their relations in Russia. One day I went to see a lady and found her in great distress. She had just received a letter from her daughter in Stockholm in which this sentence occurred: "Why don't you rise up and hang all the scoundrels? What is the matter? . . . Have you lost all courage?"

"How stupid. . . . She does not know. She cannot realise anything," said my friend. "Perhaps that letter has been opened and read, and now all my family and all my acquaintances, are marked people. . . . Russians abroad do not understand anything. They do not know that every time a letter like that is found by the Bolsheviks they imagine that some conspiracy is on foot—and then wholesale arrests begin."

It would be an exaggeration to say that everyone was afraid to meet me. But had it not been for the fact of my having many old friends and relations living in the country, I would have been quite unable to get on frank terms with any Russian. And those Russians who did spend some time in my society were all the while tormented by consciousness of the risk they were running.

More than once an incident of the following nature occurred: I entered a tram, together with a Russian companion. Soon afterwards another Russian entered, of the small intelligentsia class, usually a neatly-dressed, Europeanised Russian, and took a seat near by. At once

he started a conversation. He had lived in England, disliked the Bolsheviks, and always had had a fondness for the British democratic system.

My companion glanced at me. We confined conversation to commonplace talk.

Asked as to his destination, the stranger named the place whither we were journeying. Finding that there was little to extract from us, he soon left us alone. "A spy," said my companion when he had gone.

"Do you think so?" I asked.

"Of course. . . . No doubt. . . . Everybody is a spy . . . especially those who come near a foreigner."

"Perhaps you're a spy," I said jokingly.

"Perhaps I am," was the quick reply. "I wouldn't trust my own mother."

Many Russians with whom I associated affected a spirit of bravado, and we had many little laughs over the G.P.U.—not natural laughs, but strained Russian laughs—laughter through tears. No sooner did one breathe the sinister letters G.P.U. than everyone put on a significant semi-humorous expression.

Yet despite their courage most of my Russian friends behaved in a quite abnormal fashion. Occasionally they would lapse for long periods into silence, asserting that it was dangerous to speak. Often they would bluntly refuse to answer questions which I regarded as perfectly innocent. And always they were quick to take offence. I almost began to think that they suspected me of being an agent of the G.P.U.

When I left the country all my acquaintances without exception begged me not to write to them. . . . And not one of them dared to see me off at the station. Since I returned I have exchanged no correspondence with Russia.

For all that, it must not be thought that Russians have no wish to know foreigners. It was always the custom in Russia to make a great fuss of strangers; and to-day there is more than ever a desire to establish close relations with other peoples. Russians thirst as much for news of the West as the West does for news of Russia. They are

dependent solely upon the Bolshevik newspapers for such information as they get concerning events abroad. Few foreigners visit the country, and, as I have shown, for a Russian to meet any of those who do so is to run the risk of arrest. Letters are strictly censored; and to send correspondence abroad or to be the recipient of any from abroad is perilous. It is difficult and expensive to get a passport to travel; people are admitted much more readily than they are let out, but once in, they are not easily allowed to go out again. Russians no longer make use of the term "going abroad," but say, "going out," while on entering their country they often say that they are "coming in," but rarely that they are "returning home."

Is it any wonder that they feel they are living in a land isolated from all the world, a land which from end to end is one vast prison—the Thibet of Europe? Is it any wonder, too, that they have become a sick, abnormal people? A morbid sensitiveness is widely prevalent.

"So you've come to see us savages," said a waitress in a restaurant to me.

"We've grown quite wild. . . . Don't you find us strange, you who come straight from Europe?" was a remark which was often addressed to me.



## CHAPTER XV

### A POLICE STATE

IN the preceding chapter I mentioned that the instrument of repression in Soviet Russia was known as the G.P.U. These initials (always pronounced by Russians as Gay Pay OO—the “oo” as in brook) stand in Russian for State Political Office, which in plain language means Secret Police.

The G.P.U. was set up in place of the Cheka or revolutionary terrorist organisation when that department was formally abolished. But the change was in name only; the methods remained the same.

The staff of the old organisation was taken over by the new, and Dzerzhinsky, who had been the head of the Cheka, controlled the G.P.U. until his death last July.

All secret police services are odious; the G.P.U. in many respects resembles what was the most odious form of all, the Okhranha, or Secret Police under the *régime* of the Tsars. It is a semi-military body composed of soldiers, police, agents and spies; its tentacles spread to all parts of Russia, even to remote villages, and it has its agents in all countries abroad. Its headquarters are located in Moscow, and in every town throughout Russia it occupies large offices in a central situation. Outside most of these offices armed sentries stand guard day and night. A large body of soldiers is permanently attached to the department, so that detachments may be sent at a moment's notice wherever disorder occurs.

The Headquarters of the G.P.U. in Moscow is situated in the Loubyanka, not ten minutes' walk from the Savoy Hotel. I passed it almost every day during my stay in Moscow. It is located in a building which was once the palace of an old Moscow noble family, and later became the offices of a great insurance firm. How

characteristic of Russia—a palace converted into a prison! Many grim jokes are made over this one-time association of the G.P.U. headquarters with life insurance. It is said, for example, that the business carried on there is still that of “life insurance,” and in the formal-looking room where so many victims have been sentenced to death there survives an advertising placard on the wall urging the public to insure their lives.

It would seem that the building was originally designed as much for a prison as for a palace. It contains a series of inner courtyards and gloomy passages that lead to a remote wing. Here, on the second storey, is a corridor, on one side of which are situated small rooms or cells where important offenders are confined. On the other side of the corridor is a large empty room, around which runs a gallery with iron railings reached by an iron staircase. In this room the archives of the insurance company were once stored; since the Revolution it has been used by the Bolsheviks as a place of execution. To adapt it for such purpose, the floor has been removed, thus deepening it after the manner of a vault or cellar to the level of the courtyard. A ladder is fixed from near the entrance above to the ground below. A prisoner sentenced to death, having been stripped naked and his clothes divided among the gaolers, is thrust through the door leading to the death-chamber, and descends the ladder to the pit below, where the executioner, armed with a Colt revolver, shoots him through the back of the head, thus disfiguring his face and rendering identification impossible. The body is then carried in a motor lorry from the courtyard outside, to some hospital, where it is dissected.

Because of its platforms and staircases, the upper part of the chamber bears a resemblance to a ship, and has become known as the “Death Ship,” and the lower part is called the “Engine Room.” Ladders and platforms are a feature of the Bolshevik *régime*. They are supposed to be symbolical of modern life—industrial life, but it would seem that they are also symbolical of death. There are ladders and platforms in the execution-place of the Loubyanka. And on the stage of the Revolutionary Theatre

ladders and platforms are always substituted for conventional scenery, while many Bolshevik publications are adorned with ladders and platforms. The Bolsheviks say that the present age is an industrial and mechanical age. If this be true of life, then also they seek to make it true of death.

It is a remarkable fact that official publications which describe in detail the duties of the police in Russia make no mention whatsoever of the powers of the secret section, that is of the G.P.U. It is merely set forth that the G.P.U. is responsible for the maintenance of order and social peace within the State. Here we may recall that language of similar vagueness was used to describe the powers of the secret police in Tsarist days. What the G.P.U. may or may not do is a closely guarded secret known only to a few chiefs of departments, whose function it is to see that the dictatorship is upheld. But if the powers of the G.P.U. be vague its actions are sufficiently definite to convince anyone that the fate of every single individual in the country is in its hands. No one is free from its surveillance. Even the correspondence of Bolsheviks so highly placed as Kamenev and Trotsky is not exempt from its scrutiny. Its agents may enter any house at any hour of the day or night, and arrest any individual—administrative arrests these are called. Without resort to any formal trial, it may deport people to the remote places of Siberia or of the Far North. There is no appeal against its decisions.

Often arrests are effected with great suddenness. A man is walking with his wife in the street. Someone beckons him, and he leaves her. After weeks and perhaps months have elapsed she will hear that he is "somewhere in the Urals." One of a company dining at a restaurant is called away suddenly; he, too, vanishes. Or an artist at a theatre is required to see a mysterious visitor between the acts—and never reappears.

Arrests are made on ludicrous grounds. I knew a man—a notoriously gentle and law-abiding individual if ever there was one—who had been in prison several months on the grotesque charge that he had intended to make

himself Dictator of Russia. Small children have been imprisoned and shot on counter-revolutionary accusations. It was much the same during the French Revolution. At that time people were arrested and executed on the most frivolous charges; on one occasion the revolutionary tribunals went through the solemn ritual of sentencing a dog to death, a sentence which was duly carried out, with all the majesty of revolutionary law.

When I was in Moscow an old Englishwoman came to me and said: "My husband (of different nationality from herself, but not Russian) has been in prison for several months. . . . I went to take him some food the other day. . . . The girl clerk in the prison turned over the pages of a book hurriedly and said she couldn't find anything about him. . . . They shot him—I'm sure he's dead."

And she burst into tears.

"A few days later I went back," continued the old woman between her sobs. "I insisted on knowing if he was alive and if so where he was. 'What a nuisance you are!' said the same girl clerk. And again she turned over the pages of the book, running her finger rapidly down the list of entries. 'Ah, here he is!' she said at last. 'Gone to Siberia!' 'When?' I asked. 'Can't say,' she answered. 'Don't know anything at all about him.'"

I tried to console her.

"I'm sure he's shot," she kept on repeating.

Almost every day I saw prisoners being conducted through the streets, in many instances surrounded by police with revolvers out and fingers resting on the triggers. These prisoners were of all classes, peasants and workers, as well as intellectuals. One got sick of the sight of those gloomy columns.

It is true that the death penalty is not inflicted so frequently as formerly; but there is overwhelming evidence that many people are still executed at the instigation of the G.P.U. Mysterious incidents have occurred in the gaols or detention camps, as a result of which numerous prisoners have been shot, the Bolsheviks alleging that they attacked the guards or attempted to escape. Several



such affairs have occurred at the Solevetsky Monastery, which, as a consequence, has earned the name of "The Camp of Death." This monastery is situated on an island in a pine forest in the remote north, and in the long winter, when the sea is frozen, it is entirely cut off from all communication with the mainland. It has been much used as a place of detention for irreconcilable intellectuals. The Bolsheviks have taken good care that no foreigners should visit the monastery.

The number of people confined to prisons for offences against the Revolution is enormous. But still larger—much larger—is the number of people whose goods have been confiscated and who have been ordered at short notice and without trial of any kind whatsoever to leave the town in which they lived and take up their residence in some distant part of the country.

Frequently, on visiting the Department of Justice in Moscow I passed through a long room where a crowd, mainly composed of women with tear-stained eyes, stood in front of a platform on which, before a table covered with red cloth, sat three workers in black tunic jackets. Upon the wall behind was a familiar portrait of Lenin—the portrait which gives his sly, narrow eyes a leering expression and brings out prominently the Tartar breed in his face. The assembly was made up of relatives and friends of the men who were to be deported; and they had come to plead that the sentences might be remitted, or at least their hardship lessened in some way.

The laws of Soviet Russia, it should be explained, are the laws of a country that is still regarded by its rulers as in a state of revolution; this fact in itself explains their terrifying nature. But so long as the Bolsheviks remain in power there can be little hope of this Revolution coming to an end. For the Constitution of the State which they have set up pledges them to maintain what is described as a dictatorship of workers and peasants, and to wage ceaseless war on all other classes. It is in the spirit of this Constitution—the spirit of class strife—that the laws are framed. The purpose is to recreate Society from top to bottom, not only to equip it with entirely new political

and economic systems, but to force it to think in all matters as its rulers think. It follows that there is no end of laws, and that most laws aim at the exaltation of the State and the consolidation of its power over the minds as well as over the bodies of its citizens.

So vaguely and comprehensively are these laws worded that it is possible for the State to arrest and imprison any individual whom it may desire to deprive of his liberty. A summary of the outstanding features of the Criminal Code may not be out of place here. The widest possible interpretation is given to counter-revolutionary activity; it is sufficient that a person is suspected to be found guilty; and the smallest act of indiscretion is often punished with severity. No martial law could be more rigorous. For example, here is one definition of a crime taken from the Criminal Code: any action which weakens or seeks to destroy the power of the Soviet, or which does anything to injure the Proletarian Revolution.

Any kind of assistance to the international bourgeoisie is also deemed a crime. It is obvious that so vague a definition may be made to include the meeting of a Russian subject with a foreigner, or the sending of a letter abroad. But that is not all. Any passive resistance to the Government is punishable equally with active resistance, and any person who acts against the Government and yet does not realise that he is so acting may be severely punished.

Any person who shows disrespect to the Red Flag or to the emblems of the Revolution, or who insults an official, may be imprisoned for not less than six months.

Two crimes—espionage and speculation—are a source of constant trouble in Soviet Russia. The first-named—espionage—is encountered in all countries, but in Russia it is met with more than anywhere else. In the first place, Russia is surrounded by enemies who are constantly sending agents into the country to discover her military resources, and the counter-revolutionaries among the *émigrés* likewise have their spies there. It is obvious that the Revolution has to be ever on its guard. But in addition to military espionage, the Bolsheviks have invented a new crime of a like category, one called “economic espionage.”

During the whole of my stay in Russia I was never able to get a clear definition of "economic espionage."

I asked a high official at the Foreign Office what it meant and his answer was as follows :

"There are many owners of confiscated factories who would like to get their properties back. I don't blame them for this; but we have to keep a close watch upon them. They are constantly trying to communicate with the managers and workers of their former enterprises, and endeavouring to extract information as to how they are being run by the State. In plain language, they are plotting to get their properties back again. . . . That is economic espionage."

But elsewhere I heard that the authorities widely interpreted the law relating to espionage. For example, a Russian woman who had made inquiries on behalf of the American Relief Fund in the famine area was arrested a year later and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. Such inquiries were of a purely economic nature, and an indispensable preliminary to the proper distribution of relief. I also heard of a German who was arrested and kept for a long while in close confinement under abominable conditions and then deported, because he obtained information from an official friend in a government department concerning the value of a forest concession in which he intended to be financially interested. No doubt he resorted to an irregular procedure, but the punishment was certainly disproportionate to the offence.

The mere fact that such a crime as "economic espionage" exists (apart from the numerous arrests that have been effected as a consequence) has produced a permanent state of nervousness in all circles connected with the economic life of the community, and commercial men are often afraid to communicate one to another the most simple facts of business. In these circumstances a foreigner who desires to investigate economic conditions or to establish business relations finds himself baffled at every turn. It is bad enough for a Russian to live under such conditions; but a foreigner is always an object of suspicion. In this respect the Russia of to-day resembles Japan of Shogunate times.

In regard to the second major crime against the economic despotism of the Bolshevik State, the crime of speculation, the difficulty of obtaining a coherent definition was no less than that which I had encountered in regard to economic espionage. I had long conversations on the subject at the Departments of Justice and Finance and with the Chief of the Police in Moscow.

All were vague in their answers, but the most informing of the three was the Chief of Police, who said:

"A speculant (in Russia a special word is used to describe one who practises speculation) is one who sells or imports from abroad any prohibited commodity, who deals illegally in currency and who, as a middleman in business transactions between the State and private enterprises, deprives the State of its just profit."

"And how many speculants are there in Russia?"

My informant shrugged his shoulders: "In Moscow," he said, "there are several thousand professional speculants."

"And what happens to them when they are found out?"

"The big speculators are prosecuted and imprisoned; the small ones are exiled to remoter parts of the country. . . . And if they persist in speculation they are sent into far-off regions in Siberia, where their speculative energies may be usefully applied in opening up and colonising new regions."

When I was in Moscow many individuals said to me: "Russia is a police state." No more accurate description of the system which the Bolsheviks have set up could be given. Russia is in truth a police state. And it is difficult to see how it could very well be otherwise. A state governed by a dictatorship whose purpose it is to establish Socialism, must be a police state. Lenin never pretended that Socialism could be realised unless the people were drilled and dragooned into accepting it. When the time came that they did accept it, there would then, he said, be no need at all for the State. His ideal was Society without the State. But first there had to be a period when the State would be more powerful, more terrifying than any State known to history, the period when the people were being compelled by brute force to



repress their individual instincts and to behave socially. Hence the Soviet State has to be a police state, and not only a police state, but a highly-militarised state also.

"That is all very well in theory. But is it really necessary that so many people should be arrested for nothing at all and unjustly exiled or imprisoned?"

I asked this question of a prominent Bolshevik leader, to whom I was expressing my detestation of the methods of the G.P.U.

"The activities of the G.P.U. are exaggerated," he said (in true official style). "Hardly a day passes on which no plot against the Government is discovered. And every Bolshevik of importance goes about in hourly danger of his life. . . . There is a gang of Monarchists with headquarters at Riga who have threatened to assassinate every one of us. They have their agents in Russia and others are waiting on the other side of the frontier to get us as soon as we cross. . . . It is very serious, I assure you. . . . We have full information."

At this stage he handed to me a long typewritten list of alleged Monarchist conspirators.

History was repeating itself in my presence. During the French Revolution the prolongation of the terror was always justified on the ground that plots against the Republic had been discovered.

I ventured to remark that if things were so bad as he had described it could hardly be suggested that the Soviet was a stable Government.

"That," he replied, "is not for me to discuss. It is a matter of high politics."

It is not to be doubted that the G.P.U. is the real power in Russia to-day. Instances have occurred where foreigners have been arrested, and when representations were made to the local authorities they were told that nothing could be done for them, but that they must apply to the G.P.U. And in some cases, where the authorities promised early releases, the G.P.U. declined to agree, and the unhappy people remained in prison.

When I was leaving Russia I had experience of the power of the G.P.U. I had filled up several books with

shorthand notes. Desiring to be perfectly frank with the authorities, I acquainted the Foreign Office with this fact.

At once an expression of alarm came upon the face of the high official with whom I was talking. "You cannot take them out of the country," he said decisively.

"But they represent several months' hard work," I mildly protested.

"But perhaps there is something in your notes about our military preparations," he remarked. "We must be careful. It was the same in England during the war. . . . And we are in a state of war all the time," he added.

Again I said that such a condition of affairs hardly fitted in with the Soviet Government's pretension to stability; and again I was reminded that this point could not be discussed.

At first I was told that I must translate all my notes before leaving the country and submit them to censorship. But after a few days' delay it was agreed that I should read over the notes in the presence of a secretary and a stenographer representing the Foreign Office. One morning these two officials came to my room in the hotel. The secretary was a nervous young Jew who, when I had originally protested against the refusal to allow me to retain my notes, had taken me by surprise by remarking: "You mustn't think you are dealing with Egyptians or Indians. . . . If you were in your own Foreign Office you wouldn't dare to protest as you do here."

I reminded him then that the Bolsheviks were allowed to have correspondents in London, and that their messages were not censored nor their notes confiscated.

"But there is a revolution here——" he interrupted.

And so I was right in my idea that the Revolution was still in being!

The stenographer was a Russian Jewess who had lived and worked in America. These two—the secretary and the stenographer—obviously belonged to the petty bourgeois class. But soon there arrived a third person, a little, middle-aged woman. She had a shrewd face and suspicious eyes and was of proletarian origin. Her part in the business was to represent the G.P.U.

I suggested coffee, but all three declined. Then we

began the task of reading notes accumulated during a visit which had lasted four months.

The secretary from the Foreign Office desired, so I gathered, to make the proceedings as agreeable as possible.

As I translated the notes with the stenographer leaning over my shoulder, she repeated my words to the representative of the G.P.U. I observed that whenever Trotsky's name was mentioned she pricked up her ears.

After a while everyone became a little weary of the performance, and the lady of the G.P.U. signified that she had heard enough.

I must say that the whole proceedings were carried out with courtesy. But it was quite evident that the Foreign Office played a secondary *rôle*, and that the G.P.U. were the real masters of the situation.

To-day, nine years after the Bolshevik seizure of power, the terror still exists. It is true that it is nothing like so severe as it was in the days of Militant Communism, but nevertheless, as we have seen, it is sufficiently drastic to make life a nightmare. For what reason does it survive? The following passage which Thiers wrote concerning the terror in France will, I think, supply the answer:

"The formidable machine which they had been obliged to instal in order to withstand enemies of all kinds began to be no longer necessary, but once set going they knew not how to stop it. When the signal is given, when the idea is established that lives must be sacrificed, all dispose themselves for this horrid purpose with extraordinary facility. Everyone acts without remorse, without repugnance. People accustom themselves to this, like the judge who condemns criminals to death, like the surgeon who sees beings writhing under his instrument, like the general who orders the sacrifice of 20,000 soldiers. They frame a horrid language according to their new operations, they render it gay, they invent striking words to represent sanguinary ideas. Everyone stunned and hurried along keeps pace with the mass; and men who were yesterday engaged in the peaceful occupations of the arts and of commerce, are to-day seen applying themselves with the same facility to the work of death and destruction."

The day came when the people of Paris who had cried out for atrocities were disgusted with atrociousness, when death itself had become demoralised, and when pity triumphed over rage. On that day Danton said, "It is better to be a poor fisherman than to govern men," and again, when the Terror of which he was one of the authors sought to destroy him he exclaimed, "I would sooner be guillotined than guillotine."

In Russia the people too are disgusted with the Terror, are sick of its atrociousness. But it still remains. In France the Terror destroyed those who instigated it. In Russia the leaders are quarrelling bitterly among themselves, but so far they have not sent any one of their number to the "Death Ship."

In France it was found impossible to restore prosperity while the Terror remained, and with the Terror went the despotism of the Revolution. In Russia the revolutionaries are striving to preserve their dictatorship and so are compelled to persist with the Terror. But at the same time they are seeking to reconstruct the shattered economic foundations of the country, and are meeting with a certain measure of success. How comes it that, whereas France had to rid herself of the Terror before economic rehabilitation was possible, Russia is attempting the same task while the Terror survives? There are, I think, several explanations of this contrast. In the first place, we live in the twentieth, not in the eighteenth century. The power of the modern state has been immeasurably strengthened by the development of scientific and mechanical weapons, and when, as in Russia, this state, though nominally a socialist state, guarantees private property rights to 85 per cent. of the population, it is in reality interpreting the will of the majority. Finally, it must be remembered that the Russian people have been accustomed to despotic rule throughout the ages, and that, as a consequence, they are slow to revolt against the Revolution. The Secret Police, moreover, is a very old institution in Russia. Ivan the Terrible had his *Opritchnina* or Secret Police, which became so powerful as to be a State within a State. In the time of Boris Godunov denunciation and calumny were terrible



sources of social division. Men of all classes, including even the clergy, gave information against one another; members of one and the same family feared to hold communication with their fellows. With this system of denunciation there went torture, capital punishment, and the destruction of homes. And since those days espionage, terrorism, and execution have been practised in many reigns, down to that of the unhappy Nicholas the Last. Russia is a backward country; it remains to be seen whether the application of the principles of Karl Marx by the methods of Ivan the Terrible will enable her to become an enlightened and progressive one.

Spy government is as ancient as the world itself. It originated in the East, centuries before the birth of Christ, and doubtless its existence in Russia to-day may be traced to the Tartar invasion, which was itself remotely traceable to a great Communist experiment in China. It is not for nothing that the Communism practised in Russia is called Asiatic Communism.

Wherever spy government has prevailed—and at different periods of history it existed in many countries—the decay of civilisation has followed. History shows that under such a system there can be no spiritual development. Where everyone may be a denouncer all become deceivers, and where terror is systematic and universal the conscience is benumbed and the will enslaved. Tolerance of man for man is replaced by hatred, and love of father for son and of son for father is poisoned with distrust. And in the last resort spies are employed to watch upon spies and themselves become corrupted. Thus the law, having too many eyes, in the end has no eyes wherewith to see at all. Lenin, as has been said, dreamt of a society without a State, that is a society without laws, without police, without spies, a society of perfect men. He explained, however, that this could not come about until men had been drilled and disciplined. But what if the State, in seeking to make man perfect, should itself fall into corruption? And fall into corruption it must if, as in Russia, it is based upon a system of spies.

## CHAPTER XVI

### TALKS WITH TERRORISTS

OF all the gatherings which I attended while in Russia those where Bolsheviks and non-Bolsheviks came together were the most interesting. On one occasion a woman said to me: "Would you like to meet a man who has signed thousands of death warrants . . . one of the most terrible figures of the Revolution?"

I did not hesitate to accept the invitation. We met in a little house in a Moscow suburb. Four or five persons were present, two women and three men, all of whom had the characteristic appearance of Russian intellectuals. We drank tea and chatted amiably. Funny anecdotes were told about the G.P.U. and everyone laughed heartily. . . . I found the gathering very pleasant. Tea and cake, a typical bourgeois social function.

Suddenly a man with the face of a professor turned to me and said: "What do you think of Soviet Russia?"

I gave a few impressions, in the course of which I remarked upon the Terror. "It seems to me," I said, "that people are arrested wholesale. Guilty or innocent—it doesn't make much difference."

He smiled, and taking off his spectacles, breathed on them and began to clean the glass with his handkerchief.

"You can't understand. You come from comfortable England. Revolution is not a tea-party. We forgave many of our enemies. We trusted them. And afterwards they betrayed us."

"But the innocent——?" I interrupted.

"The innocent!" he exclaimed. "Who is innocent? . . . People must know that to be against us even in their interior, to desire to oppose us and yet not to have the daring to do so, may bring punishment upon them. That is Terror."

"What a nightmare of an existence!" I said.

"Perhaps. But it is Revolution. It requires firmness and conviction to go through it. Not everyone can survive. Many of our comrades have committed suicide, others have gone mad or taken to morphia or cocaine. And a good many have had to be shot by us. All those comrades were revolutionaries of the emotional type; weak, unstable. Either they got drunk with blood and power, or were seized with remorse. Yes, it needs a certain kind of character to live through such times; one's ideas must be firm."

I remarked that in the French Revolution there were guillotines in the streets, and mob demonstrations at executions, but that in Russia nothing of this nature was to be seen; the work of the Terror was done in secret. On that account, it seemed to me to be all the more fearful. All people had hunted expressions on their faces . . . the atmosphere of tragedy and mystery was everywhere.

"It's better now. . . . Things are a little quieter. We don't shoot so many. . . . But all this secrecy, all this mystery of which you speak, was necessary. As you say, it is more terrifying to carry people off suddenly and shoot them in cellars rather than in open places. But it was our purpose to be terrifying, not spectacular. Revolution, I repeat, is not a tea-party. We don't want to make martyrs. Most people are weak. They don't mind dying in public, to be historic figures, even on a guillotine—but to be shot in a lonely, dark cellar—that's another matter! And besides, we had to avoid arousing public pity. We did not forget that during the French Revolution people got tired of seeing victims on their way to the guillotine and began to show sympathy for them. Shopkeepers even went the length of putting up their shutters when they passed by. In the end Robespierre removed the guillotine to the outer limits of Paris."

"But when it came to Robespierre's turn to be executed the guillotine was back in its old place, on the spot where it destroyed Marie Antoinette," I thought to myself.

I was told that the man with whom I was speaking had the reputation of being a puritan, and that he lived

in very poor circumstances. He spoke softly and slowly, without a trace of feeling in his voice. And he did not make the impression upon me of being in the least cruel. He was just an ordinary man such as one might see in the streets of Moscow any day—or even London! His morality was simply that of the soldier who kills in battle—in him the patriotism of country had been replaced by patriotism of revolution.

On another occasion I was present when a young Bolshevik had a discussion with a disillusioned revolutionary belonging to the intelligentsia. There are many such disillusioned revolutionaries in Russia, people who have lost all faith in human nature itself. One of them said to me: "Send me some literature from England."

"What kind of literature?" I asked.

"The *Morning Post*," he answered.

I smiled.

"I mean it," he insisted.

The conversation between the Bolshevik and the disillusioned intellectual drifted, as most conversations in Russia do, into a discussion on the conduct of the Revolution.

"The whole business was barbarous and Asiatic . . . not at all what we had worked for," said the intellectual.

"And what did you expect?" asked the Bolshevik with a sweeping gesture of his hand. "A little popular disturbance. . . . A few speeches. Talk of humanity, brotherhood. And then the curtain rising on a new world. No, my comrade, revolutions are not made in that way. You understand nothing. You don't understand that great new forces were let loose in the world, that all the old morals were finished—done with—that quite new measures, new values came into existence. All the filth that had been hidden in man's soul for ages was dragged out into the open. It poured out and covered the earth. And of course it stank."

"But you Bolsheviks did nothing to stop it?"

"Why should we? . . . The more filth the better. Oceans of it had to flow before the earth could be cleansed. And it is still flowing and will flow for a long time yet. You forget that it is one thing to agitate, to get ready



for a revolution and quite another when millions are on the move—when the revolution is actually taking place. Who bothers to think about individuals then, about whether it is just or wise to save the life of John or Mary? Who cares about culture, about humanity? Slaughter, revenge—these are the things that are uppermost in the people's mind. Not your pacifist revolutionary idealism. Who has time for that? It is even harmful to think of it at such a moment where there is so much work to be got through. You thought you understood the masses in the old days when they were suffering, meek and oppressed. But when they turn, like wild beasts upon their masters, you are indignant."

"But why did they turn upon us?"

"How did you expect them to discriminate . . . they are not cultured bourgeoisie? They were mad with revolutionary rage . . . drunk with blood."

"But you urged them on!"

"No; we followed them. And we did so because their class egotism drives them to destroy all classes and to create a new world. That is why they are a power and we are a power. . . . And we will stop at nothing. If it is necessary to have guillotines we will have them. If it is necessary to play the part of spies or *provocateurs* and denouncers, we will not hesitate to do so. . . . We are not sensitive intellectuals with morbid, tortured souls; and clean little ideas. We can look at blood and not faint."

On a third occasion I was present when a conversation took place between a woman of the intelligentsia class, a Social Revolutionary, and a soldier of the Red Army. The soldier spoke in the language of pamphlets. The woman remonstrated with him for his rough manners. He had entered the room in muddy boots.

"What do you expect from us? To kiss your hand and call you High Honourable? No, comrade, those days are over. No more bourgeois culture."

"But you can't have Socialism without bourgeois culture. We don't live in the days of the French Revolution. We've got to have railways and aeroplanes and

electricity. And who gave you all these things? Why, the bourgeoisie, of course. Without them you'd have to go back to caves and the Stone Age."

"It doesn't matter. We'll have our own proletarian culture. We don't need yours."

"And up to the present what has it given you?—lice—typhus—filth."

"No, not so quick, comrade. We got those things from you and your friends the Allies—from the blockade and the Civil War. . . . And besides, where did you get your grand education from? From your parents. And they, where did they get the money from to pay for it?—from us, from the exploited workers and peasants. That's why we ripped up the bourgeoisie—squashed them. That's why we keep our foot on them. We had to do it, to pull down everything, so as to have empty ground to make a fresh start on. Now, my comrade, we will soon have Socialism. Believe me, it won't be long coming all over the world."

"But you must be human if——" began the woman.

"Human!" As the soldier uttered the word "Human!" he laughed. "An old bourgeois prejudice—sentimentality. It's only the class war in these days; and nothing else. All dangerous elements must be wiped out. Everyone must work. He who does not work shall not eat. Iron discipline—that's the thing—now. It's no time for people with white hands and soft flesh."

"But people say that you Red Soldiers do not work at all—and, look, your hands are quite white and soft," said the woman in a teasing voice.

"We don't work. Our job is to shed our blood," said the soldier.

"That's just what the Tsar's officers used to say," she reminded him. "How many people have you shot?"

He tapped his revolver at his side. "If it could only speak it could tell some tales," he said.

"Don't you dream? Haven't you a conscience?"

"What—over this! Don't you remember what Lenin said: Every capitalist ought to be hanged from a lamp-post."

One more little drama. The parts are the same, the disillusioned intellectual and the Bolshevik.

"You betrayed the Revolution!" said the intellectual.

"Don't talk nonsense! Have you forgotten all your history? . . . Don't you know that revolutions always happen this way? It can't be helped. It had to be. How can we betray the Revolution when the masses are behind us?"

"The mob——"

"And you. Who have you behind you? What have you been doing in these great times? And what are you going to do? Fold your arms like a saint and look holy? History will have no use for you; you'll go on its rubbish heap. The people whom you call the scum make the Revolution—and you—you advocate revolution all your life and when it comes, what do you do? Become indignant because blood has had to be spilt to carry out your ideas."

"But before the Revolution you too were against murder—against capital punishment."

"Perhaps. But times have changed. Marxism is dialectical. Things move at a great pace in these days. New methods have to be worked out every moment. . . . And besides, we don't teach the workers. We persuade them. We have only arrested and shot the counter-revolutionaries, the bourgeoisie. What's the good of having ceremonies with them? They talk a different language from us. They will never think as we do."

## CHAPTER XVII

### MILITARISM AND PROPAGANDA

IT was Karl Marx, I think, who said that after the Revolution triumphed in France, infantry, cavalry and artillery were substituted for liberty, equality and fraternity. Had he been alive to-day I wonder what he would have thought about Soviet Russia, a state whose foundations, it is claimed, are laid upon his teachings. For in Soviet Russia there is no liberty, no equality and very little fraternity, but there is an abundance of cavalry, of artillery and of infantry.

It has been shown that the Bolshevik rule is concentrated in the G.P.U. with its network of spies. Mention has been also made of the fact that the G.P.U. possesses its own army of soldiers. This army is composed of 150,000 to 200,000 men, including many foreign elements, Letts, Armenians, Chinese and Tartars, and its leadership is entrusted to reliable young Communists. These battalions may be called upon at any moment to suppress local tumult. The Kremlin, which is the headquarters of the Soviet power, is guarded by a separate contingent of 5,000 picked soldiers, all of whom are considered to be sincere Communists. Thus the Soviet Government has at its constant command a body of privileged troops with which to uphold its power, and whose status resembles that enjoyed by the Cossacks under the Imperial *régime*. At the same time its efforts are directed towards the militarisation of the whole nation. Military service is compulsory for all men between the ages of 20 and 40, the duration being 8 months in the infantry, 2 years in the cavalry, 4 years for the navy and 3 years for aviation. Numerous rifle clubs have also been established. Sons of the bourgeoisie are not allowed to carry arms, but are compelled to serve in labour, commissariat and transport corps.







OFFICERS OF THE RED ARMY WAR ACADEMY.  
Trotsky in the centre.



RED SOLDIERS RECEIVING A MARXIAN EDUCATION.

The permanent strength of the Red Army is officially stated to be 600,000, but this is probably an under-estimation. Each year more than one million conscripts of 21 years of age present themselves for enrolment, of which about 850,000 are passed as physically fit. The Red Army cadres can absorb only 270,000 recruits annually. But there are 4,500 training centres established in Soviet Russia at which every youth immediately before he attains military age must undergo at intervals 2 years' training, living at home, except during attendance at camp. It is evident, therefore, that in the event of war the *personnel* of the Red Army could be rapidly expanded.

There is no doubt that the Bolsheviks are keen militarists and that they are desirous of possessing a formidable army organised on modern lines. Particular attention is paid to gas warfare. Trotsky boasts that he obtained the secret of the new gas invented for the United States Army, and the Tank Section of the Red Army has devised a gas-proof tank with an oxygen feed for the crew. Special fire companies heavily armed with machine-guns have also been created. Aviation is weak; the Bolshevik forces have not at their disposal more than 300 aeroplanes.

Were it called upon to wage war against a first-class Power, the Red Army would encounter the same difficulty in regard to equipment as did the Imperial Army during the Great War. Not until Russia has a larger and more efficient industry will she be able to develop independent military strength on a considerable scale. Meanwhile, it is conceivable that her alliance with Germany may one day prove to be of value to her. At present she relies to a very considerable extent upon Germany's technical instruction.

The average Red soldier is much the superior of the average soldier of the Imperial *régime*. He is far more alert, both mentally and physically. The discipline to which he is subjected to is of a novel kind. He is under no obligation to salute his officers when he meets them, and an officer may salute a private first. Both officers and men mingle freely in sport and in social life generally.

Fully eighty per cent. of the recruits come from

the villages and can neither read nor write. Not a single one of them is permitted to leave the Red Army until his illiteracy is corrected. As part of their education they are given a course in social economics according to the theories of Marx and Lenin, and when they return to their villages they are expected to spread the teachings of Communism among the peasants. In consideration of their services they are exempted from the payment of land tax.

The Bolshevik power rests mainly upon the G.P.U., which, if necessity arises, can be reinforced by the Red Army, but in addition the State makes despotic use of propaganda in order to maintain itself. I have never seen so many bookshops in any city in the world as in Moscow. Nearly every government department has a bookshop of its own, or a bookstall at the entrance to its own offices. All the bookstalls on the stations are covered with propaganda. And the State publisher boasts that he is the largest publishing firm in the world. Ninety million copies of books are circulated by him annually. Instances have occurred where propaganda has been sold by the pound weight to the peasants in the village. Every line that is written, no matter on what subject, political or otherwise, is subjected to strict censorship. The sale of certain books written by classical authors, both Russian and foreign, is entirely prohibited. Plays are only permitted to be performed when they have received the sanction of the censor, and this sanction is often withheld on purely political grounds.

The press is a state monopoly; the number of journals published of all kinds is about 500, and their total circulation at the beginning of 1926 was officially stated to be not more than two millions, a circulation which in a country of 130,000,000 inhabitants, hardly exceeds that of the *Daily Mail* in England with a population of 46,000,000. All newspapers without exception are under the direction of the Communist Party or of Government Departments. In fairness to the Bolsheviks, it should be stated that from time to time these newspapers publish frank and even devastating criticisms of administrative shortcomings. But great care is taken to see that they contain nothing which



would be calculated to undermine the authority of the clique that may happen to exercise power at the moment. When Lenin was ill he wrote an article which did not meet with the approval of a number of his colleagues, and it was only after much pressure had been brought to bear upon them that they agreed to publication. At one time they suggested that a special copy of a paper containing the article should be printed, solely for the sick leader to peruse. From time to time articles by Trotsky and other equally prominent leaders have been suppressed. Judging by the Soviet newspapers, State journalism produces very dull reading. Whenever a communist conference meets the speeches of the leaders are reported at interminable length, a single speech very frequently running to 15 or 16 columns. An attempt is being made to spread political newspapers in the village, but the peasants are more concerned with eggs and butter than with Marxian economics. An incident recently occurred where a country newspaper was solemnly reprimanded by the party authorities because its leading article was devoted to the subject of chicken rearing and contained a large portrait of a hen! It is strange to read in village newspapers, intermingled with items of purely rural interest, praise of Saklatvala (whose name, the peasants say, resembles that of a patent medicine), and denunciations of a remote individual named Chamberlain.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### SOVIET CONSTITUTION: HOW IT WORKS IN PRACTICE

How the terror affected the daily life of the Russian people has been shown; and it has been stated that the Secret Police is the real Government of Russia. Let us see next how it is made possible for the terror to maintain itself along with a constitution, the formulated principles of which are not undemocratic.

In seeking an explanation of this paradox, it is first necessary to take a glance at the Constitution of Soviet Russia—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as it is called.

The Union is divided into four great Republics, the Russian (which is the principal Republic with its capital at Moscow), the White Russian, the Ukrainian, and the Trans-Caucasian. Of these republics two are federations, the Russian containing twelve autonomous republics and nine autonomous regions, the Trans-Caucasian three independent but allied republics and three autonomous regions.

One might enter into an elaborate explanation of the Constitution, quoting in particular those sections wherein it is stated that the power is to be exclusively in the hands of the working classes; that the aim is ruthlessly to suppress all exploiters and all attempts to perpetuate the division of society into classes; that the propertied classes are to be completely disarmed and the bourgeoisie annihilated; that the Russian Republic is a free Socialist community of all the workers of Russia; that genuine liberty of conscience is ensured to every worker, and freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda permitted to every citizen.

One might perhaps go further and explain how the Constitution provides that Russia shall be governed by Soviets (or Councils) from which deputies are to be elected to Congresses of Soviets representing larger administrative

units (comparable, perhaps, with our Rural District and County Councils), culminating in the All-Russian Congress of Soviets which meets twice a year and elects a Central Executive Committee or supreme legislative and administrative body, composed of two hundred members, who in turn appoint the Council of People's Commissars to preside over the different departments. In theory, it may be said that the Central Executive Council has powers analogous to those exercised by heads of State and Parliaments in capitalist countries, and that the Council of People's Commissars is comparable with a Cabinet of Ministers.

The Central Executive Committee holds four sessions during the year. But the Council of Commissars has power to issue decrees at any time, the only matters in regard to which it may not do so being those covered by the fundamental laws of the Constitution, as, for example, foreign relations, war and defence. Decrees are not issued so freely as formerly, but nevertheless they are still frequent. The Emperor's ukases were not more frequent; certainly they were not more autocratic. This power to govern by decree enables the Council of Commissars to be the masters of the situation. But behind this body, dictating all its actions, stands the ruling clique. Membership of the Council of Commissars is not necessarily a qualification for belonging to this clique. Even M. Rykov, the President, has not, so far, been included in the inner circle of dictators.

The Constitution lays down that the right to vote belongs to all persons, without distinction of sex, who have reached the age of eighteen years with the exception of the following categories: (1) those who employ others for the sake of profit (an exception has recently been made in regard to the peasants who employ hired labour); (2) private business men, agents, middlemen; (3) monks and priests.

In the towns, the Soviets are elected in large workshops, commercial establishments and educational institutions; scattered communities of workers engaged in small enterprises or institutions are called together for electoral purposes by the Trades Unions; while housewives and domestic servants are convened at election times on the ward principle.

It is contended that this system ensures that the members of the Soviet shall be in constant touch with the electorate; and any member failing, on his part, to maintain such contact may be recalled on the demand of the majority of the electors. A member of the Soviet is required to participate daily in administrative work; thus he is both a legislator and an official, the idea being that in this dual rôle he will develop all the virtues and none of the vices of both offices.

Such a constitution, it might be supposed, would result, as the Bolsheviks say was their intention, in a genuine government of workers, intellectual as well as manual.

But it did nothing of the kind. What happened was as follows: there was no such thing as a secret ballot; elections were conducted by assembling the voters in public. The procedure was simple. In the towns the Communists presented their lists of candidates, and the Chairman (a nominee of the authorities) announced: "All those against, hold up their hands." Whereupon no hands were held up, for no one had the temerity to offer opposition. The Communists, it should be added, were in many instances professional party men, not genuine workers. In the villages the management of elections was frequently entrusted to communist youths.

Another device of the Communists for securing domination must be mentioned. Care was taken to see that all the principal offices of the various Soviets were occupied by Communists, and that the majority of the members of the executive committees elected by these Soviets, and in whose hands all power was concentrated, were Communists. Moreover, it was enacted that every executive authority in the area over which it exercised control, should carry out any order of a superior executive authority. Thus dictatorship from above was ensured.

Both in town and country there was considerable apathy among the electorate. The Bolsheviks believed that this apathy was mainly evident in the villages, and in the early part of 1925 they published statistics to show that the proportion of peasant voters participating in the elections did not exceed 40 per cent., and that in some instances it





ELECTION FOR THE MOSCOW SOVIET.



was much less, as low on occasions as 19 per cent. The results of these elections were, moreover, quite different from those obtained in the towns. In the rural districts, where communities are remote and scattered, the Government could not control the elections so rigidly as in the towns. Hence at the outside only 2 or 3 per cent. of Communists secured election. But a very large percentage of the electorate was composed of peasants who were described as not merely poor but poverty-stricken, and the sympathies of some, but not by any means all, of these poverty-stricken peasants inclined towards the Communists.

Here we are faced with a mystery which requires some explanation. As we ascend the scale of governing bodies we find the proportion of Communist members progressively increasing until we reach the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets at the top.

Thus, whereas the village Soviet has only 2 per cent. of Communists at the most among its membership, the Volost Soviets have 5, the Gubernskaya 30 to 40, and the highest authority of all, the Central Executive Committee, equivalent to a legislature, up to 80 per cent. of declared Communists. When in Russia I sought from many responsible Bolsheviks an explanation of these figures. Some of these Bolsheviks were as puzzled as I was myself, but usually I was told that as village deputies ascended in the scale of authority they gained more opportunities for acquiring political knowledge and their outlook broadened, a circumstance which accounted for their becoming Bolsheviks. But a second explanation, which I heard from another side, was a little more illuminating. It was not possible for the Bolsheviks, I was informed, to influence effectually the elections for the scattered village Soviets—the peasants were far too numerous and too hostile for that to happen. It was a different matter with the higher bodies to which villages sent deputies; these were more centralised, more compact and altogether more controllable.

If, it may be asked, so few Communists are to be found in the lower Soviets, what are the political views of the remaining members? The answer is that officially these

members have no political views; that is to say, they always subscribe themselves as non-party. In Bolshevik Russia no party is legal save the Communist Party; and therefore if any person does not belong to it he is forced to declare himself as non-party. Not a single individual is allowed to escape a declaration as to his political views; and not only as to his present political views, but also as to those which he held in the past, remote as well as recent. Such information has to be furnished on forms which are frequently required to be filled by the State.

In these circumstances it was not strange that there should be apathy among the electorate. As far as the village was concerned, the Bolsheviks made an attempt to explain away the indifference of the peasants by saying that as they were denied political rights in the Tsar's time they could not be expected to take too enthusiastically to self-government, of which the Soviet was a quite new and unfamiliar form. But in point of fact the Soviet is far less democratic than the old *Mir* or village meeting. And yet the Soviet is a foundational organ of a government that is described as a democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants, the avowed purpose of which is to bring about the close union of these two sections of the population. The truth of the matter is that the peasants are undisguised enemies of the Bolshevik *régime*. They regard it, not as a dictatorship of the workers and the peasants, but as the tyranny of the workers over the peasants. Nothing will persuade them that it is a rule of the exploited over the exploiters, of class over class. They see in it only the domination of town over country, of the factory workers over the land workers. In a word each peasant feels, no matter whether he be rich or poor, that he has something in common with a fellow peasant, common origin and life on the land and interest in the individual ownership of a portion of it, common religion, habit and even superstition; but that he has no corresponding links with the man from the town, who preaches about the need to divide up the land and everything on it, and says there is no God and no such thing as a miracle; and yet who cannot explain all the wonderful



things that happen in the world—a man who knows everything and yet knows nothing.

Things got so bad that in January of 1925 the Government summoned a Conference to devise measures for the reform of the rural Soviets, which M. Kalinin, the President, described as "ossified." He went on to say that the peasantry believed that the Party organisations had usurped the entire function of the rural Soviets, and did not permit the people to take part in governing themselves. One delegate from the Moscow region said quite frankly that the peasants looked at the matter in this light: "The Communists are such jugglers that if they want to do so they can force through even the candidature of a horse."

As a result of this Conference and of criticism generally, the Government realised that a dangerous situation was developing; that both workers and peasants, particularly the latter, were to a very large extent boycotting the Soviets, from which the dictatorship was supposed to derive its authority; and that these two sections of the population, whose unity was essential, were becoming hostile one to another. A movement described as "Brightening up the Soviets" was therefore begun. There was general agreement that the first thing to be done was to induce "the broad masses of the working population," who called themselves non-party, to take a more active part in the Soviets. In order to achieve this purpose two measures were determined upon: (1) a slight relaxation of electoral control, (2) widening of the franchise.

In order to encourage production and facilitate absorption of the large number of unemployed in the villages, the right to hire labour for the land had been restored to the peasants. Hitherto the hiring of labour had been a disqualification for the exercise of a vote; this disqualification was now withdrawn. At the same time the franchise was further extended so as to include millers, dairymen, blacksmiths, artisans, handicraftsmen (who employed no more than two apprentices or one man), petty tradesmen, and members of free professions. It was also resolved to cancel all elections where not more than 35 per cent. of the

peasants had voted, and to order new elections where a substantiated charge of official interference had been made. And, lastly, permission was given for candidates to be nominated outside the official list.

The election that followed led to unexpected results, and an official analysis of the returns, compared with those of former years, revealed some interesting facts. While only two-fifths of the electorate took the trouble to record their votes, remarkable evidence was forthcoming of the growth of political activity in the villages. Four years previously only 22·3 per cent. of the peasant electors had voted; by 1925-6 that proportion had increased to 47·7, only 1 per cent. less than the proportion of town electors who recorded their votes. More striking still was the fact that the peasant voters had increased each year at a much greater rate than the town voters.

Other interesting facts emerged from the analysis of electoral returns. During the three years ending 1926, both in town and country, the number of individuals deprived of voting rights on the ground that they belonged to the bourgeois class diminished. At the same time, the proportion of poverty-stricken peasants elected on the village Soviets declined; at present it is no more than 34·7 per cent. of the whole membership. The number of poverty-stricken peasants holding office as Presidents of Village or Volost Soviets, or as members of Executive Committees, also fell. In a word, this section of the population upon whom Lenin mainly relied for the establishment of Communism in the village, had been thrust into the background. It is the old story of the ascendancy of the well-to-do over the poor.

The analysis further showed that village labourers and demobilised Red Army soldiers elected on rural Soviets or to responsible posts had fallen off; and a similar decline was to be noted in regard to Communists occupying posts as Presidents of Soviets or as members of Volost Executive Committees. In all these instances the decrease was not large, but taken in conjunction with other significant figures it was evidence of reaction against Bolshevism.

In regard to the towns the statistics prove equally illu-

minating. The proportion of electors exercising their votes among the non-organised section of the population increased in three years from 12.5 to 44.4 per cent., whilst the corresponding figures for the members of Trades Unions, upon whom the Bolsheviks rely for support, showed a slight decline from 51.9 to 50.8 per cent. Furthermore, the percentage of workers' deputies on town Soviets was reduced from 46 to 36.4 per cent. In the Soviets which were representative of combined town and rural areas the decrease of workers' representatives was still more striking. In ten towns no workers' deputies were elected at all, and in some instances the representation declined from 78 per cent. to as low as 9 per cent. It was also revealed that during the past few years the percentage of Communists on town Soviets fell from 70 to 45 per cent.

In some of the Soviets the increase of bourgeois elements soon made itself felt. Opposition to the leadership of the Communist Party began, and demands were put forward that the use of public money for Trades Union Clubs and for proletarian educational purposes should cease, and that confiscated property should be returned and taxation lowered. Attempts were also made to establish various parties in opposition to the Bolsheviks; for example, a peasant party and nationalist parties in the several republics.

It is quite evident from this and other circumstances, which I have mentioned, that the petty bourgeoisie, which is the most numerous class in Russia, is struggling to assert itself, and, both in town and country, is meeting with some measure of success. Such development is quite consistent with the opinion always advanced by some careful students of Russia, that the mass of the people desired a bourgeois, democratic *régime*. This opinion, it may be recalled, was held by some of the most prominent leaders of Bolshevik Russia when they opposed Lenin in the early days of the Revolution, but he insisted that a workers' government would prove to the peasants that it could be more useful than a bourgeois government.

The results of the election were quite contrary to the expectations of Stalin and his associates, whose intention in relaxing control had been to encourage political activity

among the workers and not among the bourgeoisie. Judge, then, of their surprise, when they saw that the exploiters and not the exploited had gained ground. But whatever may be the composition of the Soviets, the terror remains in being, and the Communists are therefore still in a position to exercise the necessary pressure in order to secure their own ends. Also it must be borne in mind that the hand which loosened the screw may well tighten it again: and in fact, following upon the election, orders were at once issued that in future those provisions of the Constitution which disqualified the bourgeoisie for the vote must be more rigorously enforced.

When in Russia I spent some considerable time in the villages on the Volga and elsewhere, living among the peasants. I came across very few who were not bitterly opposed to the Communists.

"Why don't you join the Party and try to change it?" I asked the peasant.

"Nothing good ever came out of them," was the answer which I received.

"But there is no one else to govern Russia," remarked my companion.

"Perhaps not, I don't know. . . . But some foreign country may come. We must be careful," said the peasants.

And other peasants who were present nodded agreement.

The Communists do not care to go to the country themselves; it is altogether too dull (and often too unsafe) for them there. "We know very little about the village. . . . We are a city party," said M. Zinoviev the other day. And he spoke the literal truth. Whenever the Bolsheviks have a Party Conference delegates read out letters which they have received from the villages just as we might read out letters from Central Africa telling of singular happenings.

When I was in Moscow, M. Zinoviev read several such letters to an assembly of Communists. These letters said that the pre-war type of *kulak* (or rich peasant) was again in power. The Communists and poor peasants dared not



utter a word. One letter contained these words: "We cannot trust the leadership of affairs to inexperienced poor Communists; we must elect rich peasants, who worked before in the Tsar's time and have experience of communal affairs." And another letter concluded thus: "The poor peasants are standing in the corner keeping silence and scratching their heads. . . . And the rich peasants sometimes praise the Government, which is not at all pleasant to hear."

The Bolshevik leaders continually urge the poor peasants to develop class-consciousness, and to enter and dominate the village Soviets. But these poor peasants find that politics are one thing, and that life is another. If they join the Trades Union, the *kulak* will not employ them. If they wish for credit, only the *kulak* can give it to them. If they need goods of any kind, only the *kulak* has these goods. Even when the State comes to their aid with charity they are still in the hands of the *kulak*. The State gives them seed, but they must go to the *kulak* to borrow a horse for the conveyance of this seed, and the *kulak* exacts his own terms.

Is it any wonder that the rich man is the real power in the Russian village, not the Communists and not the Soviet? Communism, in a word, is a joke for the Russian village. But how do the peasants who have entered the Communist Party regard Communism? The following little story characteristic of the Russian village at the present moment furnishes an answer, while at the same time affording a precious insight into the peasants' moral conceptions.

There had been a family festival, which degenerated into an orgy. Every one present got uproariously drunk; windows were smashed and much damage done. How was the damage to be paid for? No one had any money. One of the roysterers, a Communist, was seized with a bright idea. He would pawn his party ticket. The peasant with whom he carried out the little transaction was a malevolent person; and instead of waiting for the ticket to be redeemed he took it to the local secretary of the Party, and handed it over to him in return for

cash. Whereupon the offending member was reprimanded. But again he got involved in a celebration and, running short of ready money, resorted to the same expedient. Again the lender cashed the ticket with the secretary. Matters were serious now. "Appear at once!" This peremptory summons was sent to the hard-up peasant.

"Haven't you trousers that you can pawn instead of the Party ticket?" said the secretary severely.

"Ah—the party ticket—you can't sell that. Nothing will happen to it after it is pawned. You can always get it out again," answered the unrepentant culprit.

The secretary impatiently waved his hand. "Is it possible," he said with great solemnity, "that a member of our Party can get drunk? Where are your ethics?"

"About ethics—we are not guilty. And if they are not there, there can be no judgment against us. We are not educated in universities. And as for drunkenness, don't you get drunk yourself?"

The secretary spat on the floor, and with that the interview ended.

I stayed for a while with the chairman of the local Soviet in one village on the banks of the Volga, not far from Nijni Novgorod. To this village in the summer time a few visitors came for a holiday. My host was a *kulak* who owned a large house which he let furnished sometimes. Everyone in the village treated him with deference. It was the local Soviet authorities who took me to him in the first instance.

The village was the headquarters of a Volost or larger administrative unit. And the local authorities were composed of two young men of the town-worker type. I found them outside a little wooden building, the offices of the Volost, seated on a box amid a black cloud of mosquitoes, vigorously smacking their faces and necks; the one was the President of the Executive Committee, the other the Secretary. Later, I was introduced to a hunchback who was the tax-collector, and who, because of his being a hunchback and having a bad cough and strong views on the state of society, reminded me of a character from the pages of Dostoevsky. These three

young men were complete masters of the village and of a very large area of surrounding country. The peasants, I could plainly see, regarded them as strangers; they were called "the Communists," and several of the village people whispered to me about them with great contempt. That the youths were well-meaning I have no doubt; but their methods were crude. Among other things they desired to show me the Volost hospital, of which they were very proud. It was a Sunday and the old doctor was resting. I said that I would wait until another day; but they would not hear of this. And so they banged on the door until the poor old doctor heard them and got up. What else could he do? They were "the authorities."

The village was demoralised. In the centre was a workman's club run by the Communists, in which there was an ancient piano and the usual portraits of Lenin and Trotsky; it was quite empty—a gloomy place!

But the local *kabak* (or public house) was crowded at night with drunken peasants singing songs; and the church (into which I looked on a Sunday) was crowded too, only there the congregation consisted chiefly of women, whose heads were covered with spotless white linen cloths.

The authorities appeared to have little to do. I discussed politics with them; only two questions seemed to interest them, Would England give a loan to Soviet Russia, and when would a revolution begin in England?

The weather was tropically hot, and everywhere one went one was followed by thick clouds of flies and mosquitoes. And at last the authorities, who, like myself, had grown tired of aimless wandering about, proposed that we should all go and bathe in the Volga, an invitation which I gladly accepted.

The Chairman of the Soviet, with whom I stayed, was a typical peasant and a typical *kulak*. His house, as I said, was the most conspicuous in the village; it stood at the end of a lane on rising ground; it was two-storeyed and there was an air of prosperity about it. In front there was a little seat shaded by a spreading tree, where the family sat and gossiped with their neighbours in the evening. Most of the other houses in the village were

crooked little hovels; mere huts made from blackened wood with empty interiors, in which people squatted about in rags. The Chairman owned more land and more cows than anyone else in the village, and his wife had a genius for household management, a fondness for clean linen, and a passion for cooking which kept her occupied from morning until night. As a consequence, she had the characteristic appearance of the good housewife; a face reddened in front of hot fires and hands roughened by hard toil. Her daughter, who did all the light work, as became the younger generation, was always very clean and neat, while her bearing was appropriately proud—and even haughty.

Meanwhile, the lord of the household, as Chairman of the Soviet, occupied himself with village affairs. He was not a Communist; he was, I should say, a representative type of the village bourgeoisie, who had once been ruined by the Revolution and who had re-established themselves so soon as the New Economic Policy was adopted. The whole family was religious. On the walls were numerous religious pictures, among them several cheap German coloured prints of Italian masterpieces, including Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," and in the corner of the living-room a shrine of ikons, before which carefully tended lights were constantly burning. On the opposite wall was a portrait of Lenin.

At the invitation of my host I attended a meeting of the local Soviet. The agenda, it appeared, had first to be submitted to the Volost authorities; nothing could be discussed without their consent. More than this, all decisions had to be ratified by them. The little assembly was composed of grey old men, and the subjects discussed were of the same local character as those which once occupied the old *Mir* and largely occupy our own Parish Councils—making new paths and repairing old ones, erecting or repairing little bridges, and appointing a shepherd. No sign of any interest in politics, nor yet of any opportunity for rising youth to express itself. Just a dull gathering of old peasants.

I visited numerous villages situated far from the Volga. There I came across no authorities at all; the peasants were



left pretty much to themselves ; all that the State required of them was that they should pay their taxes. It is not safe for Bolshevik officials to live in remote villages ; many of those who have been stationed in such places have been murdered ; and the lives of many others were made so hellish by the peasants that they had to go away.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE COMMUNIST PARTY

WHEN the second Revolution took place in October 1917, the Communist Party (or the Bolshevik Party, as it was then called) numbered no more than 200,000; by 1924 the total had been raised to 680,000; and to-day the membership has reached 1,025,000,\* to which perhaps ought to be added 1,600,000 potential Communists— young Communists—or Comsomols, as they are named. The growth of membership has therefore been fairly rapid. But the aggregate is not so large as might have been expected. It represents not more than one-seventh of the organised workers and a very small proportion of the total number of workers and peasants in the country.

How is the fact to be accounted for that the Communist Party, which regards itself as the only proletarian party, contains (relatively speaking) so few workers and peasants? To answer this question is to throw a searchlight upon the whole system of government in Russia. Because this system is despotic the Bolshevik leaders must have at their disposal a Party that can be manipulated. They cannot dispense with a Party altogether, for their pretension is that the Government is not only democratic, but more so than any other Government in the universe, and this pretension has to be supported by some visible evidence. But what they can do is to contract or expand the membership of the Party on the plea of regulating its social composition as the conditions of the moment may require.

Both methods have been applied in the nine years of its existence. When, for example, Trotsky advocated the democratisation of the Party, and after a keen struggle

\* These statistics are official, and are therefore not to be wholly relied upon.

got his way, 200,000 working men were at once admitted, not, as might be imagined, to give effect to his policy, but with the deliberate purpose of obstructing it, the idea being that autocracy would be strengthened by the introduction of politically immature elements into the Party. And this manœuvre was completed a little later, when many members belonging to the intelligent class were driven out of the Party. It was rightly supposed that these educated members had a better understanding of Trotsky's aims, and because this was so, Trotsky was accused of being an ally of the bourgeoisie, which in Russia is quite sufficient to damn anyone.

Again, in the more recent controversy that took place in the Party, Zinoviev, who on this occasion led an opposition, made the sweeping proposal that all the workers and landless peasants should be admitted to membership, a proposal which, had it been carried into effect, would have increased the total membership by at least five millions.

The suggestion that the Party should become a Party of all the proletariat, including the proletarian peasants, was stigmatised as demagogic by the very men who had admitted 200,000 new proletarian elements in order to counteract the Trotsky influence. The dictatorship of the Party, it was now pointed out, was founded upon compactness and discipline, and the admission of millions of workers, whose political (*i.e.* Communist) consciousness was ill-developed, and in many instances non-existent, would undermine this dictatorship and render the Party unmanageable. It would, in effect (so it was argued), transform the Party into a labour party identical in character with the British Labour Party.

The true explanation of this hostility to the admission of the workers to the Party was to be found in the drastic change in economic policy which had taken place. In the early days of Militant Communism, the Party, to make use of Lenin's own word, attracted the "scum" of the population, and the "scum" also flowed into the factories, taking the place of the serious workers who sought refuge from civil war and hunger in the village. The immediate effect of the Revolution, therefore, was to dissolve the solid

elements of the proletariat. Strictly speaking, it was not a workers' revolution, but a conventional mob's revolution.

The serious worker did not begin to creep back to the town and to the factory until 1923, when wages and conditions had appreciably improved. Their ideas then as to what Bolshevism stood for were confused. But they were amazed to find awaiting them not the new world of Socialism, but the old world of Capitalism. True, this Capitalism was termed State Capitalism. But to the worker it made little difference that the new masters belonged to a Party called the Communist Party, whereas the old masters had belonged to the order known as the Capitalist order. These new masters were members of the Unions, just as the workers were, but they bullied them and treated them generally no better than the old ones had done. Nothing had been changed. No longer could the Bolsheviks profess a demagogic love of labour. They had ceased to be comrades and had become "bosses," and their watchwords were the same as the old watchwords, discipline—hard work—production. Few of the serious workers entered the factories, and those who did soon exchanged the factory benches for the desks of a government department. The Bolshevik administrative apparatus has this peculiar merit, it quickly absorbs any worker who is disposed to be critical of the system.

Of the rest of the serious workers the Bolsheviks said that they were merely social reformers and not Communists, and that consequently, should they be admitted to the Party, its dictatorship would be undermined. In a word, the Bolsheviks regarded such men as politically unenlightened, and in order to punish them for their lukewarm attitude towards the Party, gave them no employment whatsoever in the state factories. As a consequence the State is now desperately in need of skilled labour. Its very existence depends upon industrial expansion. It cannot afford, therefore, to dispense with the services of serious workers, who at the same time are the most skilled among the workers. But where is the Party to find the enlightened and the class-conscious support of which it stands so much in need? The "scum" which did



the dirty work of the Revolution so well is now found to be quite useless for the purposes of reconstruction, and its political masters do not hesitate to say so. Since it cannot find work, this "scum" is beginning to murmur: "Of what use is the Revolution? It does not give us a lift up in life as we thought it would. It does not even give us employment."

In spite of the elaborate spy system prevailing in the factories, strikes have frequently occurred of which neither the police nor the Party had forewarning. This is not a surprising circumstance. For if there is discontent, both among the skilled workers and the "dark" masses, it is evident that the Party is out of touch with the class which it presumes to represent.

It cannot, therefore, any longer be pretended, even by the Bolsheviks themselves, that their *régime* is a dictatorship of the proletariat and peasants. But what they now say of it is that it is a dictatorship of the vanguard of the peasants and workers on a democratic basis. To this extent they have modified the claim which Lenin made and which was advanced as the whole justification for the Revolution, the claim that the setting up of Soviets was a realisation of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

And here the question occurs: How far is the *régime* in Russia to be regarded even as a dictatorship of the *vanguard* of the proletariat and peasantry? This question can only be answered by a closer investigation of the Communist Party.

The Communist Party is the only organ of political expression in the State; all other parties have been suppressed, and any expression of political views, other than those of authentic Bolshevism, is punished as a counter-revolutionary offence. The Communist Party is never described, even in official language, as such, but is always spoken of as "the Party." Very frequently public bodies or assemblies, which desire some change in law or some reform, resolve to approach "the Party" as well as the Government; and in legislative enactments "the Party" is placed on terms of equality with the State.

At its annual Conference, the Party elects a Central

Committee composed of 60 members. But this Committee only meets every three months. In reality, the management of the Party is vested in three sub-committees: (1) the Political Bureau, which controls the policy of the Party and therefore of the Government; (2) the Organising Bureau, which is responsible for all official appointments; (3) the Control Commission, which controls every individual member, probes from time to time his political conscience, investigates his moral character, and conducts periodical "cleansings" of the Party in order to rid it of careerists, corrupt elements and adventurers generally. But it frequently happens that many members who do not come within these categories are driven from the Party, while those who do are left undisturbed. Though the avowed purpose is to preserve a social content, proletarian in character, the real purpose is to secure support for the ruling clique, and a pretence is soon found for the dismissal of anyone whose loyalty may be suspect.

Not only is the Party manipulated through admissions to membership, but the membership itself is subjected to rigorous control. The procedure employed for this purpose is the same as that used to influence the elections to the Soviets; it is based solely upon the exploitation of fear. Whenever officials of branches have to be elected nominations are submitted by the higher authorities. Invariably no discussion is allowed.

The question: "Who is for?" is omitted, and only that "Who is against?" is put. No one dares to vote against; and so the nominations are accepted unanimously. Like methods are employed in regard to all important matters dealt with in the form of resolution; and Bukharin, upon whose authority this information as to Party procedure is given, adds that "The same thing is noticeable in a slightly changed form in the higher ranks of our Party hierarchy . . . to speak against the authorities is a bad business."

This bureaucratic control of the Party has produced the evils usually attendant upon the misuse of power. Intrigue prevails throughout all grades of the Party, the highest as

well as the lowest. At the top is an aristocracy, mainly composed of old Bolsheviks. Here birth-pride is replaced by intellectual arrogance. Proletarian class-consciousness is affected, but aristocratic exclusiveness is practised. And, as with all aristocracies, instinct for self-preservation has created a conviction of self-superiority and a passion for power.

In the matter of emoluments the Bolshevik aristocracy has little advantage over the rest of the population; a Commissar, no matter how eminent, does not receive more than £5 weekly. But there are important privileges attaching to the chief posts in the State: an official residence, a motor-car, and free boxes at the theatre. Lastly, there is the prestige of high status which in Soviet Russia counts just as much as it does in any other country.

The rank and file of the Party is inarticulate. It is true that Congresses are held periodically to which the leaders present exhaustive reports containing much frank criticism. But the elections of delegates to these Congresses are manipulated just as the elections of Party officials generally and of members of Soviets are manipulated. And when it comes to voting on resolutions the fear of the authorities is the determining influence; in a word, the shadow of the G.P.U. stands behind every delegate's chair.

To keep this tight hold over a party whose members are dispersed throughout so vast a territory as Russia calls for systematised and unceasing vigilance. Political elements hostile to the Bolsheviks are constantly penetrating into the Party. These "foreign bodies" have to be rooted out. Job-seekers have to be dealt with also.

Communists who are given appointments, it should be explained, are paid less than non-party office holders; and if detected in malpractice are punished with more severity than other delinquents. But to get employment of any kind in Soviet Russia is to be privileged, and in the filling of such posts as are available members of the Communist Party are always given preference. Hence to become a member of the Party is to have means of existence assured—an existence on a very low level, it is true, but still not to

be despised in a country where so much destitution is prevalent.

All parties are no doubt exposed to dangers like those which I have described, but it is evident that the Communist Party has reason to fear them more than any other, for it is the framework of a dictatorship, and as such cannot afford to suffer loss of rigidity.

Dilution of the Party strength with disguised opponents and careerists is not the only peril to be guarded against. The controlling bureaucracy is in a state of perpetual apprehension concerning the political health of the Party as a whole. Here it finds itself confronted with difficulties which are the inevitable consequence of its own despotic methods. On the surface, the Party preserves a well-disciplined and united front. It could not very well do otherwise. For it has now become a vested interest, and unity is a condition of survival. Each individual member, moreover, has to think, not only of preserving the Party, but also himself; hence, if he is dissatisfied with the group of leaders who hold power at the moment, he is careful not to disclose the fact in public. The result is (to make use of one of Trotsky's expressions) that a stillness has settled over the Party. But the stillness is merely on the surface; it is frozen stillness. Deeper down a quite different picture is presented; for repression has driven discontent underground. This discontent seeks an outlet in the formation of little groups who meet in secret. In one or two instances such groups developed into larger bodies which were soon discovered by the spies of the G.P.U., who are numerous in the Party. The leaders were at once arrested and thrown into prison on the charge of counter-revolutionary activity, the punishment for which is severe. Smaller groups have met with a like fate.

It is easy to understand that this continuous repression has created a morbid atmosphere around the Party. The Bolsheviks have a detestation of the word idealism; but no doubt a great deal of sincere idealism was and still is bound up with their cause. The old Bolsheviks, most of whom had all their lives suffered exile and poverty for



their beliefs, felt inspired when the moment came for translating these beliefs into action, and the young Bolsheviks, their youthful imaginations thrilled with the romantic idea of co-operation with these revolutionary veterans in the task of building up a new Russia and a new universe, threw themselves into Party work with torrential enthusiasm. All home and family ties were broken; children were divided against parents; and husbands and wives separated, because their political views differed or their political work interfered with their domestic duties. Everyone wanted to engage in social and political work of some kind; yet few knew where to begin or, having once begun, how to go on. The severe discipline imposed upon Party membership led to depression. And finally disillusionment came to many. Large numbers of Communists resorted to drugs and drink, and suicides have been and are still frequent. A vigorous struggle is waged against this degeneration of the Party. The ideal Communist is represented as a cool, sober man, who leads a life of virtue, and who puts the discipline and the interests of the Party above everything else. Such a man, if he marries at all, marries a Communist woman and in his relations with the world avoids all bourgeois society.

Thus Communism is regarded as a sect apart, and its philosophy as a kind of religious idealism. In a word, the perfect Communist is envisaged as a perfect man—strong, unemotional, self-sacrificing. Nevertheless, in the life of the community, many individual Communists play an important part. It is accepted that nothing can be done without the help of a Communist, and therefore a close acquaintanceship with a Communist is regarded as essential to existence itself. As social and economic activity spreads, so the Communist is more and more sought after; indeed he has become a hero of the drawing-room and a favourite of the new bourgeois society. Thus life shows a tendency to resume its normal flow, and Communism to drift with its current.

## CHAPTER XX

### TROTSKY AS A HERETIC

IT has been shown that the Communist Party is governed by a bureaucracy; that, to use the words of Trotsky, "it lives on two floors."

The chief instrument of this bureaucracy is the Political Bureau, an instrument which was forged for the purpose of controlling the military strategy of the Revolution, and which has survived for exercising the dictatorship in time of peace. Kamenev said at the twelfth Congress of the Communist Party: "In the Political Bureau is concentrated at the given moment for a limited period of time, the entire political will and thought of the labouring classes."

While Lenin lived there was no question as to leadership; Lenin was Tsar. Disputes arose then as now within the Party, but so great was Lenin's authority that its unity was never seriously menaced. Lenin had only to threaten to resign; and at once it came to heel. What might have happened had he survived is impossible to say; for many of his cherished beliefs are now challenged by men who were his nearest colleagues; yet it must not be forgotten that in his latter days he himself had no particular reverence for "fixed ideas."

History will no doubt say that his greatest achievement was to die when he did. For he left the scene just at the moment when he had succeeded in inducing the Revolution to abandon its Communist experiment and take to a new course, which has preserved Bolshevik power, though it has sacrificed Bolshevik principles. This last fact, the fact that Bolshevik principles have been thrown overboard, is only now being fully realised. And hence some Bolsheviks are beginning naïvely to inquire: Whither are we going?

Meanwhile, Lenin has become the god of Soviet Russia ; it only remains for someone to steal his body from its tomb in the Red Square for the legend to spread that he has ascended to Heaven and the drama of deification will be completed.

Many Bolsheviks resent the intrusion of stage-managed mysticism into the matter-of-fact kingdom of Marx ; these have learnt the lesson that " Religion is opium for the people." But their leaders are wiser, for they understand quite well that a little opium for the people (and for the Party too !) is not a bad thing, that it renders the task of ruling them all the easier, and that those who have been accustomed to opium cannot abandon the vice too readily. And like the good theologians that these leaders are, they understand also that an inspired word, to which they alone hold the key, is a precious instrument, with which to control men's consciences and to justify the persecution of heretics. And so Marx has become their Old Testament and Lenin their New Testament—and thus the Holy Book is complete ! Was it not Proudhon who said : " Communism is the last heritage of religious illusion " ?

Lenin was Chairman of the Political Bureau (which, as we have seen, directs policy), the other members of which were Kamenev, Stalin, Trotsky, Tomsky, Rykov and Bukharin. When illness compelled him to withdraw from the scene a struggle for power at once began. To the outside world, it seemed that Trotsky was marked out to be the successor of Lenin, and it is affirmed by some that Lenin himself had wished that this should be so.

But the old Bolsheviks could never regard Trotsky as one of themselves. His offence in their eyes was that he came late in the day to Bolshevism. The retort could be made, that it were better that he came when he did than remain faithful for years and falter at the crucial moment as they did. His past might have been forgiven him had he been a man of lesser stature, or had his character been more mild and accommodating. Whereas theirs were sluggish and mediocre minds, his was forceful and brilliant. It was true that he did not contribute any bold or original idea to the Revolution. It was Lenin's

Revolution, and whatever praise and blame attach to it will be his. But if Lenin was the Revolution, Trotsky was its spirit. The one was the fire, the other the flame. Lunarchasky has composed an interesting study of Trotsky. "Trotsky," he says, "is not a good party organiser. A tremendous imperiousness and a kind of inability or unwillingness to be at all caressing and attentive to the people, an absence of that charm which always surrounded Lenin, condemns Trotsky to a certain loneliness. . . . He is prickly, imperious, choleric. It is often said of Trotsky that he is personally ambitious. That is, of course, pure nonsense. I remember one very significant phrase spoken by Trotsky at the time when Chernov accepted a place in the Government: 'What contemptible ambitiousness—to abandon his historic position for a portfolio.' . . . In distinction from him (Lenin) Trotsky often looks at himself. Trotsky treasures his historic rôle and would undoubtedly be ready to make any personal sacrifice of his life, in order to remain in the memory of mankind with the halo of a revolutionary leader. . . . Lenin is perfectly fitted for sitting in the president's chair of the Soviet of People's Commissars and guiding with genius the World Revolution, but obviously he could not handle the titanic task which Trotsky took upon his shoulders, those lightning trips from place to place, those magnificent speeches, fanfares of instantaneous eloquence, that rôle of continual electrifier."

When nearing his end Lenin wrote a last letter to the Party in which he put on record his opinions of the various leaders. Of Trotsky he said that in spite of his being too confident he was a devoted revolutionary, of Stalin that he had concentrated too much power in his hands as Secretary of the Party and was too brutal, of Zinoviev and Kamenev that their retreat in October 1917 was not accidental, and of Bukharin that he showed much promise, but that he had stuffed his head too full of books.

When this letter was received Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev, who had the power in their grasp, were able to suppress it. But its contents leaked out and were published by Communists, who were opposed to the autocratic





M. TROTSKY.  
A leader of the Opposition in the Communist Party.



DR. SIEMASHKO.  
Commissar of Health.



methods of the ruling triumvirate, and who considered that Lenin's last testament was the property of the Party as a whole and should therefore be known to it.

About this time "fractional groupings"—to use a Bolshevik term—made their appearance in the Party. It was no longer possible to conceal the existence of unrest. It was admitted, moreover, by responsible leaders that this unrest was so serious as to endanger the Revolution. In the discussion that arose as to how it was to be quelled the acute differences between Trotsky and the dominant clique in the Political Bureau were exposed. Trotsky asserted that fractionalism was the result of the bureaucratisation of the Party. Mechanical centralism—"a terrible political danger"—had resulted. This, Trotsky said, pointing to examples from the past, would lead to the degeneration of the Party and in particular to the ossification of the Old Guard. To avert decline a new course should be set. This new course ought to consist of a Workers' Democracy; that is to say, the Party should subordinate its apparatus to itself, and thus revive its initiative, critical activity, and self-government. But first it was imperative that all repression should cease, and that all in the Party from "the top to the bottom" should have the feeling that no one dared to terrorise him.

In particular, Trotsky appealed for self-expression for the younger generation. "Youth," he insisted, "is the most reliable barometer of the Party. It is inadequate that youth should repeat our formulas. It is necessary that they should take the revolutionary formulas fighting, transform them into flesh and blood, work out for themselves their own opinion, with that courage which comes from sincere conviction and independence of character. . . . Passive obedience, mechanical drill, characterlessness, obsequiousness, careerism—away with all these things from the Party."

Trotsky's bold attitude created a sensation. Lenin had only been dead six months; it was the latter part of 1923. In the words of Zinoviev: "The Party was shaken to its foundations. . . . It was stirred like a beehive. It sustained the greatest shock in its life. It was in a fever.

It could not sleep at nights." And all because Trotsky had dared to suggest that the terror should cease, not outside, but inside the Party, that democracy should be permissible inside and not outside the Party.

Trotsky's appeal was a popular one. But the party bureaucracy was human. It wished to dictate to the masses but itself resented dictation. The ruling clique, therefore, was put in a dilemma. From this dilemma there was no escape but to accept Trotsky's plan for a Workers' Democracy. The Political Bureau and Central Control Committee met and in concurrence with Trotsky passed the necessary resolution. But Trotsky could not bring himself to believe that the surrender was sincere. He suspected that the old Bolsheviks had merely resorted to a device for putting him off, and indeed the resolution was so worded as to suggest that under their guidance educative work in the Party was necessary before democracy could be realised, whereas he had all along insisted that democracy must come from below in response to the ardent desire of the rank and file (and particularly of the young) for it. The immediate expulsion from the Party of those who actively supported Trotsky certainly showed that his alarm was not baseless.

At once, as Zinoviev said, the Party was shaken to its foundations. The ruling clique, who had control of the Press and platform, organised a campaign of publicity to discredit Trotsky. He was accused of being both a right and a left extremist. At one time it was said of him that he wished to become a Napoleon, at another that he was the Danton of the Revolution. Because he had advocated democracy within the Party he was charged with being a Menshevik, a friend of the bourgeoisie. Also it was said of him that while denouncing fractionalism he himself aimed at creating a fraction, and so wrecking the Party with the object of serving his own personal ambition. As further proof of his selfishness, it was alleged that from motives of irritation he had neglected his duties, and refused to attend important conferences. But the worst offence alleged against him was that he had set the young Bolsheviks against the old Bolsheviks, with the



deliberate purpose of undermining the authority of the latter.

In demanding a workers' democracy Trotsky demanded nothing new. Lenin had always fulminated against bureaucracy. "We have become a bureaucratic Utopia," he said on one occasion. And he too had advocated a workers' democracy within the Party, and at the close of the Civil War had persuaded his colleagues to accept his plan of reforms. But the execution of it was postponed, because economic conditions became worse and all attention had to be concentrated upon the introduction of a new economic [N.E.P.] policy.

It was not surprising that Lenin favoured a workers' democracy in the Party. For as a disciple of Marxian theories he had always held that a dictatorship must have the support of a majority of the workers in the country. He may have had doubts as to whether this measure of support was forthcoming. There is no precise evidence to indicate how he thought in regard to the matter; he must have been aware that the Soviet elections were faked elections. But if he knew that there was no democracy outside, at least he was anxious that there should be some of it inside the Party. In a word, he was disposed to trust the Party.

His colleagues had quite different ideas. They stood for undiluted dictatorship and believed that if democracy were permitted their power would be undermined. They had travelled very far since 1917. Then they were afraid that Lenin was jumping over the heads of the masses. The prospect of government by terror had unnerved them. But nine years of power with the G.P.U. at their back had destroyed all their doubts, all their scruples. Or was it that they were still unnerved—and that they feared what might happen to them if power was taken from their grasp?

The discussion (or dispute as the Russians called it) had no issue. Trotsky, whose health was not good, retired to the Caucasus. It was said in Moscow at the time that he had been exiled. But he returned in time for the Party Conference of 1924. On that occasion

Zinoviev made a dramatic appeal to him to end the quarrel by going on the platform and confessing that he was wrong. In reply, Trotsky delivered a guarded speech in which he tactfully repeated his criticisms, but ended with these words :

“To be right against the Party is impossible. We can only be right with the Party and through the Party. For history has created no other way of registering what is right.”

Stalin and others doubted Trotsky's sincerity, and the Party or, to speak more accurately, the Assembly that had been gathered together in the name of the Party, reaffirmed its support of the ruling clique. It was hoped, to use a word much favoured in Bolsheviki Russia, that the dispute had been “liquidated.”

Trotsky retired again to refresh himself with the mountain air of the Caucasus. And then, at the end of 1924, he launched his famous book “The Lessons of October.” The avowed purpose of this book was to relate historical facts, from which useful conclusions could be drawn for the guidance of those responsible for revolutionary strategy in other countries. For the first time the story of the apostasy of Trotsky's colleagues in the early days of the Revolution was told in detail. Trotsky did not undervalue the part that Lenin had played; nor yet his own part. But he did suggest that events had borne out his theories of the Revolution, whereas Lenin's theories had been proved in practice to be wrong.

The publication of the book created a tremendous sensation; again the Party was thrown into a state of high fever and could not sleep at nights.

What game was Trotsky playing? Did he desire to discredit and overthrow the ruling clique, to stake everything at one throw? Or was he merely guilty of tactlessness? His friends say of him that he is childlike in his impulsiveness and has no gift for manœuvring. They may be right. But I must confess that a close study of Trotsky's case has led me to the conclusion that he does not lack subtlety. For he has not hesitated to suppress facts which tell against himself, or which do not support his version of history.

At once his opponents, who held all the machinery of publicity in their hands, determined to wage a bold campaign in the Press and on the platform against him. Never has a campaign of vilification been organised on so gigantic a scale, and this can be truthfully said in an age not unaccustomed to grandiose advertisement. Column after column was printed daily in the Press; from every platform speeches were delivered; the whole State monopoly of propaganda, in fact, was employed—and all to discredit a man who had dared to discredit the autocracy! At the same time many of Trotsky's adherents were dismissed from office and expelled from the Party. Whoever ventured to support him did so at the peril of arrest.

It was alleged that he had sought to glorify himself and to diminish the glory that was Lenin's, and that he had plotted to substitute Trotskyism for Leninism. His offence was all the more heinous, for he had cunningly (so it was said) aimed at the destruction of Leninism through Leninism.

Thus the High Priests endeavoured to persuade the masses that Trotsky was a heretic—a non-believer in the Soviet deity, Lenin, and therefore an atheist in the second sense of the word—the Communist Priesthood sense. To find support for their denunciation they diligently searched the writings of Lenin. Every paragraph of their attacks began with the magical words "Lenin said." And in many instances they too (as Trotsky before them had done) proceeded to misquote the Master. And so history repeated itself: the theologians became politicians, and sole agents for God on earth.

It was even said of Trotsky (by Stalin, for example) that his military reputation was a legend, and that the Revolution had only been saved because he had been superseded in the direction of the campaign against the White Guards. But most damaging of all, an attempt was made to prove that he had lost faith in the Revolution. The ground for the accusation was that Trotsky had reprinted in his book one of his early articles in which he expressed the opinion that the war had more than ever emphasised the interdependence of European nations, and that to view the

Revolution in the frame of nationalism was to repeat the errors of social patriotism. Therefore (Trotsky concluded) no one revolution could support itself in isolation.

Whereupon he was asked: "What is to be done?"

To this pertinent question he returned no answer.

His opponents immediately said that he had not thought out his ideas to their logical conclusion, and lost no time in doing this for him, with the result that they represented his ideas as leading inevitably to the following dilemma: either the Revolution must freeze in its own contradictions and rot at the root while awaiting European revolution or transform itself into a bourgeois State. And so Trotsky was convicted of infidelity to the Revolution, and was condemned as a bourgeois and individualist.

In the course of the controversy Sokolnikoff, then Commissar of Finance, wrote an article in which he professed to reveal Trotsky's real views. Trotsky, he said, regarded the prospects of the world revolution as unpromising. Europe had been placed on rations by America, and European policy had become dependent on that of the United States. America had put an end to the mutual conflict between England, France and Germany, and American capital had re-established firm capitalist order in Europe. The struggle "for the possession of Europe" was over, and the victory belonged, not to the Revolution coming from Russia, but to capital with its milliards from New York. The Revolution was powerless to produce an upheaval in Europe unless it first penetrated the citadel of capitalism in America. Trotsky therefore regarded the Russian Revolution as doomed to perish, for before revolution triumphed in America the Bolshevik dictatorship would have been destroyed by internal dissension. Sokolnikoff concluded by saying that such pessimism placed Trotsky in "the category of social compromisers."

To this statement of his views Trotsky has never replied. But on many occasions he had expressed opinions adverse to the economic administration of Soviet Russia; and it was always understood that he was in favour of increasing the control of specialists and diminishing that of amateur party men.



Throughout this campaign Trotsky remained silent. But when a somewhat calmer atmosphere prevailed he tendered his resignation as President of the Revolutionary Military Soviet—a position which is equivalent to that of a Minister of War. In doing so he wrote a letter expressing surprise that he should have been accused of trying to revise Leninism and introduce a special platform of his own, Trotskyism. His book had been published, he said, under the same conditions as all other books of the Party and merely represented a further development of thought, expressed by him lately more than once, particularly in the previous year. Yet hitherto no one in the Party had suggested to him that his words were incorrect. He denied that he had become pessimistic. “In spite of all the difficulties which arise from our capitalistic encirclement,” he continued, “the economic and political resources of the Soviet dictatorship are very great.” And finally he made this formal submission to Party discipline:

“I am ready to fulfil my work whatever is assigned to me by the Central Committee in whatever position or without any position, and it goes without saying under any conditions of Party control.” But he did not remain to take up any work. His health was still bad, and again he left for the Caucasus.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE NEW DICTATORS

TROTSKY out of the way, Stalin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev dominated the Political Bureau and concentrated all power in their hands. But the harmony between them was short-lived. Towards the end of 1925, after all efforts to keep the matter secret had failed, it was revealed that a quarrel had broken out between Stalin on one side and Kamenev and Zinoviev on the other. This quarrel was largely provoked by concessions to the peasantry.

For some while the unrest among the peasants had been growing more and more alarming, and numerous uprisings had occurred. In some regions the peasants had been so bold as to agitate for the formation of a "Village Party," and in one or two instances the rich peasants had met and demanded the restoration of land ownership.

Thousands of landless and destitute peasants were roaming about the countryside and drifting into the towns. In many localities the land was inadequate for the rapidly-increasing population; while frequently well-to-do peasants had managed to get hold of the land of their poorer neighbours. In some cases the new owners gave employment to the men whom they dispossessed on conditions reminiscent of serfdom, but the number of peasants who, when they lost their land, were left without any means of subsistence at all was very large.

It was Stalin who persuaded a majority of the Political Bureau to agree to the issue of decrees permitting land to be leased and labour hired. Kamenev and Zinoviev vigorously opposed these concessions, and they were supported by several prominent leaders outside the Political Bureau, including Mme. Krupskaya, Lenin's widow.

Soviet laws had proved to be unenforceable to a very

large extent and the new decrees amounted to no more than recognition of actual conditions in many villages. While it might be argued that concessions were beneficial to the destitute inasmuch as they permitted of employment, the well-to-do peasant was the greater gainer because he was allowed to hire, not only labour but also land, and both on the cheapest possible terms. This, in fact, was the standpoint of the opposition, who urged that Leninism had been departed from, and that there was a danger that the Revolution would be sacrificed.

Bukharin, who supported Stalin (and the majority), had addressed a motto to the village: "Get rich and accumulate!" No one objected, of course, to the peasants getting rich. But the opposition urged that Bukharin's advice could only appeal to the well-to-do peasants, and to the rest, who were wholly preoccupied with the problem of keeping themselves alive, it would come as a sneer. Whereupon Bukharin and his associates insisted that the opposition had quite overlooked the middle-peasantry, and that as the *kulaki* were relatively few and the middle peasants numerous, the concessions were mainly in the interests of the latter. It was further pointed out that Lenin had always said that the Revolution must rest upon the support of the middle as well as the poor peasantry.

And certainly if it did not, there could be no justification for it, nor could it have much prospect of surviving, for the overwhelming majority of Russians are peasants, and the overwhelming majority of peasants come within the Bolshevik categories "poor" and "middle." What is more, if harmony of interests between middle peasants and town proletarians proved non-existent there could be no justification for advocating world revolution; for the Bolshevik claim had always been that such harmony did exist and that therefore a repetition of the Russian Revolution was practicable elsewhere.

Life itself, which, after all, is the only index, has not fitted in with Bolshevik reasoning; for so widespread is poverty that it is almost impossible to identify a middle-peasantry. In reality only two categories remain: well-to-do and poor, the latter being in overwhelming numbers, and

the former being few, and well-to-do only in the Soviet sense of the term.

The opposition was therefore justified in suspecting that only the well-to-do would be able to avail themselves of the privilege of hiring land and labour and in taunting Stalin with having legislated solely for the rich. But what else could he do? The whole economy of Russia is based upon peasant production, and this production must be expanded if the country is to extricate itself from its pitiable misery. The well-to-do peasant has the capital and the implements (neither of which the State can supply), and so once again the rich man wins.

But even were the peasantry to contain a very large middle category, and were the new policy (as Stalin and Bukharin affirm) to favour this category, would anything material be changed? For if the middle peasants became rich by hiring land and labour—the land and labour of the poor—how would this be an advance towards the ideal of Communism; and in what respect would Soviet Society differ from Capitalist Society? And yet if no concessions were made the peasants who desired opportunity to exploit one another, hoping to grow prosperous as a consequence, would prove awkward customers to deal with; and so from another side the Revolution would be endangered. Thus life itself impaled the Bolsheviki. To escape there was nothing else for them to do except to cease to be orthodox Bolsheviki; which is precisely what Stalin and Bukharin, in spite of all their ingenious wriggling, have done.

The second point of difference between Stalin on the one side, and Kamenev and Zinoviev on the other, demonstrated still more forcibly the insolvency of the Revolution. It was a dispute that solely concerned itself with definition. What is the existing system in Soviet Russia? Is it State Capitalism or Socialism or what? Lenin was very much taken up with the State Capitalism practised in Germany during the war. State Capitalism under a democratic *régime* in time of peace would, he argued, be a step towards Socialism. But under a Soviet Government, he added enthusiastically, it would be *almost complete Socialism*. State Socialism would therefore, he said, be



the salvation of Soviet Russia; for it would mean control over the very numerous class of small bourgeoisie who supported the Revolution only so long as it stood for the confiscation of the wealth of the upper bourgeoisie, but who resisted socialisation when it touched their own possessive tendencies.

The opposition did not deny that Socialism was being built up in Russia, but urged that the workers must not be persuaded that the existing system of N.E.P. (or State Capitalism) *was* Socialism.

Here it may be asked: What is the Bolshevik definition of Socialism? Again, reference must be made to the authentic source, Leninism. "Socialism," said Lenin, "is the conversion of the means of production into common property." This was to be realisable (so he added) when all the citizens became the hired employés of the State, the State being the armed workers. It is difficult to reconcile this definition of Socialism with Lenin's statement that State Capitalism under a Soviet *régime* is *almost complete Socialism*. With more reason, perhaps, such a statement might have been applied to the *régime* that existed in the early days of the Revolution under the name of Militant Communism. Even so, it would have been inaccurate; for although the State in those days monopolised the means of production in the towns, the whole population of which was conscripted into its service, and seized the crops from the peasants, the division of products was grotesquely unequal and the rationing grotesquely inadequate. Of this travesty of Socialism nothing remains to-day except the socialisation of the big industries, and a naked dictatorship which survives in the name of Socialism, because it guarantees private enterprise to the peasantry—that is, to 85 per cent. of the population—who, while detesting it, fear that a new *régime* would bring back the large landowners and thus diminish the quantity of peasant holdings.

What was State Capitalism of the kind that was *almost complete Socialism* in Lenin's view? His literal answer was this: "Concessions, leases, free trade, plan of distribution, growth of capitalism out of individualistic economies, when all these are submitted to the control of the Workers'

State then they constitute State Capitalism. Such State Capitalism is quite different from that of bourgeois countries; for it is limited and controlled by the Workers' State."

This is the form of "State Capitalism" that exists in Russia, but in actual practice it bears very little resemblance to Socialism. All the state undertakings are run on capitalist and competitive lines. Lenin counselled the Communist rank and file to imitate bourgeois business men and learn how to trade. And as a consequence the management of the various state trusts and syndicates has become very "smart" in the most modern sense of the word. Although in reality they have but a single interest to serve, the State, these institutions feverishly compete one with another, and besides cheating their customers in the ordinary way of business, the managers often grossly abuse their power as state officials.

No wonder Zinoviev, Kamenev and others are anxious as to the fate of the Revolution. But although they assert that the Government is departing from Leninism they cannot prove what they say. For Leninism, it seems, permits of almost anything so long as Proletarian Dictatorship is maintained.

One need not pause here to inquire what is Proletarian Dictatorship. Certainly the existing system in Russia does not come within this definition. But assuming that it did, nothing would be altered, for all Bolsheviki are in agreement that Leninism is a system which moves with the times. And Marxism too is regarded by them, not as an entirety of ideas, but as methodology capable of application to all new situations. Lenin added to the ideas of Marx from his experience of life, but he did not revise or modify the methodics of Marxian teaching.

Now that Lenin has departed from the scene, the problem is: How to apply Leninist tradition to concrete circumstances? Here we have the true source of the endless disputes in the Communist Party. All Bolsheviki agree that Leninism ought not to be dogma, but when changing times call for new measures it is regarded as a dogma, and anyone who suggests a version that does not fit in with the

ideas of the ruling clique is convicted of heresy. "If anything," wrote Trotsky, "can be fatal to the spiritual life of the Party and to the theoretic education of the young, it is the transformation of Leninism from a method which in its application requires initiative, critical thought, intellectual courage, into a canon which requires only interpreters with a permanent vocation."

In representing Leninism as the application of Marxian methodology to contemporary conditions, the Bolshevik rulers have sought to explain away all existing contradictions in the Soviet State, and to prove that Leninism is flexible and therefore progressive. But it seems that Leninism without Lenin is in itself a contradiction. And unless Leninism is applied to life, life itself becomes a contradiction of it. But how is that to be done if the Bolsheviks are themselves in violent disagreement as to its correct interpretation, and if no one among them is strong enough to command the obedience and respect of the others?

Trotsky suggested a "workers' democracy" as a solution, by which he meant democracy within the Party. Zinoviev, who bitterly opposed him at the time, later advocated opening the Party to all the workers and labouring peasants. His motives were quite different from those of Trotsky. Trotsky favoured the younger generation and desired that it should have expression. Zinoviev was conscious that the workers did not relish the present system of State Capitalism in Russia, which had created a new bourgeoisie, which, in a word, had put an end to Lenin's dream of equality. He did not desire to go back to Militant Communism, but he was afraid that the Revolution would not survive unless a revolution occurred in another country and came to its rescue. Kamenev and Krupskaya (Lenin's widow) inclined to his side. Trotsky, too, had doubts about the capacity of the Revolution to maintain itself unless a revolution broke out in a Western European country. He feared conflict with the peasantry, the overwhelming majority of whom tenaciously clung to bourgeois property rights. Zinoviev and Kamenev contended that the policy of the Government favoured the rich peasants only. But they opposed Trotsky's idea of party democracy.

for at that time they believed that democracy, even in so limited a form, would endanger the dictatorship.

For a while the dispute was heated. The Party was split territorially into a Leningrad section and a Moscow section, and each hurled abusive epithets at the other. Even Mme. Krupskaya was treated with scant respect. Finally the Stalin group won the support of a packed congress. In the name of party discipline, Kamenev and Zinoviev were sternly forbidden to continue their opposition, and repressive measures were applied to all those who supported them. Thus they were humiliated as they themselves had humiliated Trotsky a year before. The Political Bureau was enlarged from seven to nine members. Zinoviev and Trotsky retained their seats, both in chastened mood, while Kamenev was required to step down to deputy membership.

Sokolnikov, who had dared to suggest that the foreign trade monopoly should be modified as the only means of reviving Russia's prosperity, was removed from his position as Commissar of Finance, and was given a lesser office in the State Planning Department.

The old triumvirate was composed of three accomplished politicians, a circumstance which explains its dissolution. Of the three new dictators, Stalin and Bukharin were politicians. Stalin was the most powerful of the trio, inasmuch as he had the party machine under his control. He is essentially a man of action, who prefers to manipulate the party machine rather than court popularity with the masses. Bukharin is a typical intellectual. He is editor of the *Pravda*, and his gifts are largely of the literary order. Lenin, in his blunt way, had said of him that his head was stuffed full of books, and that he had not the slightest understanding of Marxian dialectics. Dzerzhinsky continued the rôle which he had always played as administrator behind the scenes and Chief of the Secret Police. But he derived new importance from the fact that he took the side of Stalin, whose policy had been adopted by the Party.

Of Stalin, the political genius of the new triumvirate, a few words must be said. He is a Georgian, aged forty-seven years. His father was a peasant of Tiflis, and a shoemaker by trade. By some accident of circumstance







M. STALIN.  
General Secretary of the Communist Party, and member  
of the Political Bureau.



THE LATE M. DZERZHINSKY.  
Who was head of the Cheka, and G. P. U. (Secret  
Police), and President of the Supreme Economic  
Council

he was sent to a seminary to be educated for the priesthood, but was soon expelled on account of his political views. While still a youth he embarked upon a revolutionary career. Frequently he was imprisoned or exiled to remote parts, whence he escaped only to be arrested again.

When the February Revolution\* occurred he was in exile in a village in the furthestmost regions of Siberia. A cool fanatic, restless, brave, and strong-willed, he was looked upon as a stalwart of the Bolsheviks' "Old Guard." After the Bolshevik Revolution, he became General Secretary of the Party, a position which conferred upon him very great power. But he was not content to be solely a party man. As a fighting revolutionary he served on three fronts against the "White" armies. Lenin said of him that he was "too cruel," and again that he was "too brutal."

Dzerzhinsky, who shared the power with Stalin at this period, was a still more remarkable man. His parents belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian nobility. He was born in 1877 in the Vilna province, and was educated in the Gymnasia School of the town of Vilna. He was brought up as a Roman Catholic, but became a revolutionary and an atheist when he was seventeen years of age. As an agitator and organiser of strikes, he is said to have had no equal. Many times he was imprisoned. Twice he was exiled to Siberia, and on each occasion he succeeded in escaping. When the Revolution broke out he was serving a term of nine years hard labour at Moscow.

Dzerzhinsky was the organiser and head of the terror, the Fourquier-Tinville of the Revolution. Whenever relentless methods were required he was chosen to carry them out. Thus when the railways had almost ceased to function he was charged with the task of re-organising them, and later he became Chief of the Supreme Economic Council, or manager of nationalised industry.

Dzerzhinsky's personal appearance was unusual. He had a pale, worn face. His glance was austere and penetrating. He saw what others thought. It has been

\* The February Revolution was the first revolution which accomplished the downfall of the Imperial régime.

said that his face was that of an ikon, and that he was born to be either a martyr or an executioner. Like Stalin, he was a fanatic. The bitter memory of persecution in the past and the vision of happiness for all humanity in the future had hardened him to steel. He was known as the "sword of the Revolution" and the "first Chekist." His sincerity was above reproach; it was passionate and overpowering. Because of it he suffered much from moods: sometimes he was full of exaltation, and sometimes his anger drove him almost into hysteria. Yet, for the sake of his ideas, there was no deed too horrible for him to sanction. Had he thought it necessary to order the execution of his own father he would have done so. No man in history sentenced more of his fellow creatures to death than this grim Pole with the "face of an ikon." And yet in 1908, when he himself was a prisoner of the Imperial *régime* in a Warsaw gaol, he wrote a tender and sentimental letter on the eve of the execution of some of his comrades: "To-night I can't sleep at all. . . . Already one hour has passed since the lamp in my cell was put out. It is quite daylight. The birds are twittering. My companion sleeps restlessly. . . . Two of our comrades are to die. . . . No doubt they have relatives, or friends, or perhaps fiancées. . . . They are healthy, full of life and vitality, and yet powerless. . . . How many have already passed from the scene? It seems that all human feeling has ceased to exist."

Neither Stalin nor Dzerzhinsky was Russian. Each belonged to an alien race which had been oppressed by the Imperial *régime*. All old Bolsheviks had suffered imprisonment and exile in the Tsar's time and had become embittered as a consequence. But Stalin and Dzerzhinsky, who were unusually firm characters, had had the ill-luck to be persecuted more than the others. Hence they emerged from the ordeal completely dehumanised; they had received no mercy at the hands of men, and they were determined to give none.

Having learnt something of the careers of the men who came into power when the Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev triumvirate broke up, let us next see how the new clique



shaped its policy. It has already been explained that one of the chief causes of the change was Stalin's proposal that concessions be made to the peasants, a proposal that received the endorsement of the Party, and was duly carried into effect. This conciliatory attitude towards the village was continued, and in the 1925-6 elections official control was somewhat relaxed, as a consequence of which startling and unexpected results were obtained. (See Chapter XVIII.) At the same time Dzerzhinsky began a fierce campaign against the mismanagement of Soviet trade and industry. During April of 1926 he delivered a series of remarkable speeches: "We have," he said, "used up the whole of the working capital bequeathed to us by the bourgeoisie, whether in funds, or buildings and material. Capital must now be renewed, industry reconstructed. Meanwhile, having no available resources, we are faced with an acute famine in manufactured goods. The same applies to our store of skilled labour; we are confronted with the task of training a new personnel of experts and workers. . . . neither have we attained the pre-war level in the sphere of industrial output."

"We are living beyond our income. . . . There is unheard-of extravagance, colossal waste. . . . Hundreds of millions of roubles are being thrown away. . . . Our industry is a bureaucratic industry. . . . All State trusts and undertakings are loaded with thousands and thousands of superfluous officials. . . . Speculation is flourishing on an enormous and unprecedented scale."

In the following July Dzerzhinsky delivered another speech in which he said: "We are smothered in bureaucracy. Our system and practice of administration are in themselves sufficient to paralyse efficiency and restrict output. . . . Thanks to our system, which holds institutions and not individuals responsible for defects and failures, we are all smothered in shoals of paper reports, and out of touch with those men who really work and are competent experts. I have, as it were, to sit on mounds of paper, and when really clever people, those who actually live and work, come to see me, I have to turn them away, because I have no time for them. We cannot go on like this. We cannot keep

pace with life; we are losing touch with it and falling behind."

And he concluded with these words: "Other methods must be discovered. I am searching for an issue but have not yet found one." All that he could suggest was that each State undertaking should be managed by a responsible individual, not by a "Collegiate," and that the already stringent control of private traders should be tightened up, and the already severe repression of speculators carried to the utmost extreme.

A few weeks later—on July 20th to be precise—Dzerzhinsky made a dramatic appearance before the Central Committee of the Communist Party. He was in an angry and bitter mood. Again he said that the whole economy of the State was being conducted in an unbusinesslike manner, that millions were being wasted, that the bureaucracy had reached colossal dimensions, and that hours and hours were idled away in the discussion of the merest trifles.

"I am terrified by all this!" he exclaimed. And then he told how he had frequently tendered his resignation as President of the Supreme Economic Council.

In the course of his remarks he made outspoken attacks upon some of the prominent leaders of the Party who were present. He accused Piatakov, his nearest colleague on the Supreme Economic Council, of presenting false and meaningless figures. And when Piatakov several times attempted to reply he waved his hand contemptuously and went on with what he was saying. He also sneered at Kamenev, and called him "a sly hero" and "a politician who has never done any serious work." When Kamenev retorted that he had worked for four long years to promote Soviet trade Dzerzhinsky answered: "You may be there for forty-four years, but you will never be any good for anything." And afterwards he said, "You all know what is my strength. I never spare myself. I am never crooked in my soul. If I see anything wrong I throw myself against it with my whole force." And here he so far forgot himself as to allude to the godlessness of the management of everything in the Soviet State.

Most of the time the meeting was in an uproar. Occa-

sionally Trotsky endeavoured to interject a remark, but he was not allowed to be heard. It was evident that Dzerzhinsky was in a desperate mood, that he was sick of the whole business, and was determined to speak his mind out.

Three hours later he died suddenly in his flat in the Kremlin. It was officially stated that his death was due to a heart attack. One account published in the Moscow press said that after the first seizure he appeared to recover and dismissed his doctor, saying that he was feeling perfectly well again. Afterwards he got up from the divan on which he was lying with the intention of going from the sitting-room to his bedroom to rest awhile. His wife offered to make the bed ready for him, but he refused her help, saying that he could himself do whatever was necessary. At the same time he took her hand and shook it fervently. Then he turned and went into the bedroom. A moment later a crash was heard; he had fallen down dead.

The body was placed in a red coffin and conveyed to the Trades Union Hall in the centre of Moscow, where it lay in state for two days. Then the coffin was borne to the Red Square, and the lid was removed to enable the dead man's colleagues to take a last farewell. Afterwards the lid was replaced and to the strains of the International the coffin was lowered into a grave beneath the walls of the Kremlin, at a spot not far from Lenin's Mausoleum. The assemblage of mourners included a large number of members of the G.P.U. The Bolshevik press, commenting on the occasion of the funeral, said that Dzerzhinsky was "a true proletarian knight with a golden, humane heart."

Stalin now became the most powerful figure in Soviet Russia, but his position was not an enviable one. No sooner had Dzerzhinsky been laid to rest in his grave than an official announcement was issued revealing the fact that the severe dissension, which broke out in the Party at the end of 1925, had been renewed. Zinoviev was again cited as the chief culprit. It was said that he had attempted to organise fractional groups within the Party and throughout the whole of Russia. More than this, he had sought to create opposition in the Communist Parties abroad. The centre of the conspiracy was the Third International, of which

he was President. A circumstantial story of dark plottings was narrated; Zinoviev, it was alleged, had made common cause with a number of renegades who had been dismissed from the Party for their heresies; secret Party documents had been stolen, copied by non-party typists and distributed; secret codes had been invented and used; and a meeting of conspirators, guarded by patrols, had been held in the woods near Moscow, all of which was reminiscent of revolutionary underground methods in the Tsar's time. As a consequence of his insubordination, Zinoviev was dismissed from his presidency of the Communist International and also from membership of the Political Bureau, a body which determines the policy of the Party and therefore of the State. This meant that he no longer held any official position.

Later Kamenev was dismissed from his post as Commissar of Internal and External Trade, and Trotsky again went on leave to recover his health. Thus the stalwarts of the Bolshevik Old Guard were thrust into the background. New men, all of them supporters of Stálin, were appointed to the vacant posts, and although Stalin's personal influence could not be compared with that which Lenin exercised, the power which he now wielded was not less than that held by Lenin when the Revolution was at its zenith. It remains to be explained that all the changes made at this period were brought about by the operation of the Party machine, of which Stalin, the General Secretary, had secured complete control; that is to say, the higher councils of the Party met, in formal session, and decreed dismissals and appointments.

Gradually the news leaked out that there had been a great row behind the scenes. Bukharin and other leaders declared that Zinoviev was not alone, that, as in 1925, he had the support of Kamenev, Radek, Sokolnikov, and Madame Krupskaya (Lenin's widow). An astounding revelation followed; the malcontents, it was said, had united with Trotsky. Indeed, it was asserted that a definite opposition made up of various groups extending from the extreme left to the extreme right, had crystallised; this opposition was called "N.O.P." (New Opposition Party), in contradistinction to "N.E.P." (New





M. ZINOVIEV.

Formerly President of the Communist International, dismissed from membership of the Political Bureau in July of 1926, and now a leader of the Opposition in the Communist Party.



M. RADEK.

Member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, and a prominent Soviet publicist.



Economic Policy). It may be recalled that two years previously Zinoviev and Kamenev were instrumental in humiliating Trotsky when he sought to introduce democracy into the Party; now, when they themselves were the victims of the Party machine, they discovered that they had common ground with him.

The Opposition had no press of its own and was not allowed to state its case in public. For an account of what happened at this period we are therefore mainly dependent on sources favourable to the Government. According to Bukharin there had been some very plain speaking in the course of a protracted disputation lasting nearly two weeks in the high bureaucratic councils of the Party. Whereas in 1925 the Opposition hesitated to say that Socialism was not being built up in Russia, it now frankly declared that the prevalent system was anything but socialistic in its tendencies. Kamenev, for example, was reported to have said, "We are travelling away from the Proletarian Revolution and from the Proletarian masses. Our State is not a Proletarian State." And Trotsky, it was alleged, had declared, "The Soviet State is far from being proletarian. All commanding positions are in the hands of a degenerate bureaucratic caste. We have nothing at all in common with the interests of the broad masses."

The indictment against the Opposition was as follows: (1) It had no faith in the creative forces of the proletariat. (2) It had ceased to believe that socialism was being introduced into Soviet Russia; on the contrary, it was convinced that Stalin was leading the country away from socialism and towards capitalism. (3) It did not regard the State enterprises of Soviet Russia as socialistic in character, and affirmed that trade and industry were not a monopoly of the proletariat, because the State undertakings were in the hands of "a degenerate caste of red masters," who mercilessly exploited the working-class consumers. (4) It not only denied the socialistic character of the system, but it asserted that the Soviet State was not proletarian and had quite separated itself from the working classes. (5) It held that Communist ideas were not conquering the peasants, but that the peasants were driving the Com-

munists from their midst. (6) And finally, it was convinced that socialism was unattainable by Russia so long as no other country accomplished a Revolution and came to her aid.

The above indictment was doubtless framed with a view to persuading the masses that the Opposition was treacherous to the Revolution. It was a terrifying interpretation, not a dispassionate recital of the ideas of the Opposition. Yet it could not be denied that the views held by some of the Opposition leaders afforded considerable justification for this interpretation.

According to Bukharin, as an alternative policy, the N.O.P. advocated a return to strict administrative measures with a view to controlling the elections and arresting the growth of bourgeois influence; the admission of fractions representing all opinions to the Communist Party—in other words, the introduction of party democracy—and lastly, increased taxation of the well-to-do peasantry, and capitulation to foreign capitalists with a view to securing money for the expansion of Soviet industry. Bukharin argued that the adoption of this policy would be calamitous, inasmuch as it would separate the proletariat from the peasantry, and would lead inevitably to the extinction of Leninism and the introduction of a parliamentary system of government, thus putting an end to the dictatorship of the proletariat and to the socialist experiment in Russia.

It was not contended that the opposition groups were wholly united; their policy or policies were described as a salad of ideas, but according to the Government these ideas all tended in the same direction: Trotskyism and the liquidation of Bolshevism. The curious mixture of the salad was evident from the fact that one group attacked Zinoviev for his mismanagement of the affairs of the Third International, and deprecated the abuse levelled by this organisation against foreign labour parties, which had resulted in the isolation of Soviet Russia in the proletarian movement throughout the world. This group urged that the Third International and the Red International of Trades Unions should be disbanded, that in the future the Communist Parties abroad should work in harmony



with other working-class organisations, and that generally a more sympathetic attitude should be adopted towards those sections of labour whose policy it was to realise socialism by evolutionary rather than revolutionary means.

Some weeks after the disclosure of the quarrel, the policy of the Opposition in relation to immediate domestic problems was published. This policy started from the recognition that the expansion of State industry and the maintenance of the prevailing standard of wages were essential for the very existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It then advocated that the money necessary for industrial development should be largely obtained from increased taxation of the rich peasants; the poor peasants were to be exempted from taxation altogether. Energetic efforts were to be made to attract the middle peasants to the side of the Communist Party. But these proposals were no more likely to save the situation than was the policy pursued by the Government. Excessive taxation of the rich peasants would only have discouraged grain production, upon which the whole economic life of Russia depends. And the exemption of poor peasants from taxation would have meant exemption of nearly all the peasants. As for the middle peasants, whose support for the Party was so earnestly desired, these were almost non-existent, for it cannot be too often emphasised that the peasantry as a whole is divided into two categories only: well-to-do and poor, and the desire of the vast majority of the latter is to become rich individuals, not collectivists. The policy of the Opposition was therefore not calculated to bring about that union of peasants and workers upon which a survival of the Revolution depends. Had it been adopted, the rulers of Russia would have been compelled to abandon their socialist experiment altogether; or alternatively to endeavour to socialise industry alone, a plan which could hardly have succeeded in a country where the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants were peasants engaged in individual enterprise and hostile to the ruling power. But the policy followed by Stalin promises nothing better. For it is a policy which strengthens private enterprise in the village and favours the rich peasant. It is unlikely, therefore, to

be acceptable to the workers of the towns who live under the iron heel of Socialism. No wonder the Opposition said of the Government what the Government said of the Opposition: that its policy would put an end to all hope of unity between peasants and workers, a unity which Lenin himself had declared was essential if the Revolution was to endure. The truth is that the Bolsheviks are quarrelling not so much with themselves as with life itself. The vast majority of the people reject Communism—and that is the whole essence of the matter. From this *impasse* there is no escape. Only one course is possible—retreat toward Capitalism? and that is what is actually taking place. The Government seeks to make all peasants rich by enlarging their opportunities for private enterprise; the Opposition desires to make rich peasants poor and poor peasants rich. Either road leads back to Capitalism.

The summer of 1926 was disastrous for the Bolsheviks. They lost one of their chief heroes, Dzerzhinsky, whose sincerity was considered to be equal to that of Lenin, and internal dissension increased. And no longer was it possible to maintain an appearance of unity; an opposition was definitely formed within the ranks of the Party.

To the outside world the old Bolsheviks still exhibit a fighting revolutionary attitude; but among themselves they resort to all the disreputable methods of that political warfare which they had always professed to despise—intrigue, abuse, demagoguery, and fraudulent misquotation of one another's speeches. Their disputes are now concerned with politics, rather than with principles, and the single thread that holds them together is that, no matter how much they may differ as to the means by which it is to be attained, all desire the same thing. Some of them had no faith in the survival of the Revolution in the beginning, and some of them have no faith in it now; but not one of them has ceased to believe in the idea of revolution, the idea that proletarian dictatorships are one day destined to rule the universe. It is this revolutionary faith that isolates them from other men, and forces them, in face of a hostile world, to submit to discipline and to sacrifice all personal dignity. To justify the total surrender of their

will they have created the legend that the Party is infallible, that it is the instrument of destiny, the perfect mouthpiece of truth, justice and Leninism. Thus for the sake of keeping up an appearance of pious harmony a new mysticism has been invented; the mysticism of Party divinity—inspired by the ghosts of Marx and Lenin. But whichever group may be in power among the High Priests of the Kremlin, it contrives that the party machine shall be manipulated in its own interests. And there is no lack of stage management (or ritual), the smooth working of which is always facilitated by the terror in the background—a real Hell on earth this, far more frightening than any fabulous Hell below the earth.

## CHAPTER XXII

### LAWS OF THE SOVIET STATE

No one doubts that to carry Socialism into effect the State must be all-powerful. But most people hold that the assent of a majority of the community is a prerequisite condition. The Bolsheviks, too, held this view at one time, but now, as we have seen, they have quite other ideas on the subject. They believe, or profess to believe, that a minority can enforce its rule upon an unwilling majority. And history to some extent is in their favour, but only to some extent. For although it has again and again been demonstrated that a determined minority can rule tyrannically over a majority, we have only one precedent where such rule effected economic and social changes as profound as those which the Bolsheviks hope to achieve in Russia, the precedent of China in the eleventh century, which had a very disastrous end.

If the power of the State must be great to carry Socialism into effect when the majority of the nation supports its policy, how ruthless must it be where only a minority favours so revolutionary a change, particularly where, as in Russia, the minority contains so few men who realise what Socialism is. Hence, nine years after the Bolshevik seizure of power, we find that the laws of Russia are the laws of a State at war, not at peace with itself. In a word, the Revolution (and its Terror) is still in being.

There is nothing that the State cannot do. It may arrest, imprison, exile and even shoot anyone whom it desires to remove, and for offences which in any other country would not be offences at all. Nothing is more significant of the conditions in Russia than the fact that capital punishment is only inflicted upon persons committing crimes against the State. Included in this category







M. KOURSKY.  
Commissar of Justice.



M. BRUCKHANOV.  
Commissar of Finance.

are bandits, of whom there are many at large, particularly in South Russia. The maximum sentence for murder is ten years' imprisonment; and if the culprit happens to be a peasant or a worker, he is treated indulgently by the Courts.

Nor does the State hold itself to be bound by agreement. For it is especially provided in the Code of Laws that it may annul any contract which it deems contrary to the interest or social economy of the State. This article may be interpreted to cover any arrangement the fulfilment of which has become irksome or inconvenient.

But comprehensive as this legal code is, it yet does not set the limits to the powers of the State. As I have already shown, the Council of Commissars frequently issues decrees which have the effect of laws; and the local administrative bodies also exercise (and very often exceed) a similar right. Consequently it would be difficult to say what is the state of the law in Soviet Russia at any given time; and the average person does not believe that he possesses any legal rights. In the remoter villages, and this is not denied by the Soviet authorities themselves, there is no law save that of the strong over the weak.

The first object of the Soviet laws is to exalt and maintain the State, that is, the Dictatorship of the Chiefs of the Communist Party; and this motive of self-preservation is discernible from end to end of the Code.

Reverence for the State and for the agents of the State is sternly insisted upon. Any person who shows disrespect to the Red Flag or to any of the emblems of the Revolution, or who insults an official, may be imprisoned for not less than six months. Some of the local authorities go to grotesque lengths in their ceremonial requirements. For example, one local Soviet issued an elaborate ukase on the anniversary of the Revolution ordering the inhabitants of the region to display red flags outside their dwellings and instructing them in the most minute detail of this duty, the length and width of the flag, the width of the black border to be placed around it, the exact position of the hammer and sickle emblem to be designed upon it, the length of the flagstaff, how the end of the staff was to be pointed, or

alternatively a metallic cap fitted upon it, and the precise situation in which it should be placed on the house itself. Finally, it was threatened that failure to comply with any of these requirements would render the guilty person liable to a fine of 300 roubles (£30) or imprisonment for three months with hard labour.

Equally interesting are the laws designed for the preservation of the State. It might be argued that such laws differ little from the laws of any bourgeois State, and that everywhere sedition is severely punishable. That perhaps is true in a general way. But the Soviet laws on the subject are conspicuously rigorous, a fact which reveals at once the unsettled state of the country. Again, we have justification for the inference that the Bolsheviks themselves do not regard their own *régime* as stable.

So vaguely is the law drafted that it is possible for the State to arrest and imprison any individual whom it desires to deprive of liberty. No martial law could be more severe. Take, for example, this definition of counter-revolutionary activity, a crime punishable with death: any action that weakens or seeks to destroy the power of the Soviet or which does anything to injure the proletarian revolution. Nor is this all. Any kind of assistance to the international bourgeoisie is also deemed to be a crime. And passive action against the Government is punishable equally with active, while any person who acts against the Government and yet does not realise that he is so acting may be adjudged guilty.

What is more, the Soviet Code is made applicable to all offences committed before its promulgation. Then there are certain provisions directed against civil disorder. These provisions, as with others relating to what is vaguely termed counter-revolutionary activity, are elastically drafted, so that they may be stretched to include any conduct which the authorities desire to include. To agitate, to disobey the legal demands of the civil authorities, to refuse to disperse a gathering menacing public security—all these are offences against the law, the punishment for which cannot be less than two years' solitary confinement in the case of leaders.

It is thus possible for the police to repress all manifesta-



tions of disapproval on the part of the population. No one belonging to the deposed bourgeois class would be reckless enough to organise a public demonstration against the Soviet power. But frequently workers have gone on strike and have assembled in open meeting to express their grievances. These meetings have been broken up by the militia or soldiers of the G.P.U., and the leaders have been arrested and sometimes shot. For these repressive measures the Government is armed with abundant legal powers. It may, for example, take the extreme view that a strike or a meeting is a counter-revolutionary act. In the Code there is, in fact, an express provision for such a contingency, for one article says: "All members of any organisation which for counter-revolutionary purposes either opposes or utilises the normal functioning of Soviet institutions and undertakings are liable to the maximum penalty, and sequestration of all property."

It is evident that such laws may be interpreted to mean anything. They are not, I repeat, the laws of a country where normal peaceful life is in progress, but of a country where a Revolution is still in being, and where the Government maintains itself by terror. Is it any wonder that the people are cowed?

To converse or hold correspondence with a foreigner may be regarded as an act of espionage, or as rendering assistance to the international bourgeoisie, thus coming within the very wide category of counter-revolutionary activity. In a word, there is no legal sanction for the liberty of the subject in Soviet Russia, and the State can therefore at a moment's notice put away anyone whose presence in the community is inconvenient.

But it is not only because of their extreme rigour that these laws are remarkable. From another aspect they are remarkable also. It must always be kept in mind that the Bolsheviks aim at effecting a drastic change in the social and economic structure of life itself. Consequently, in their laws we come across offences such as are to be found in the laws of no other country. In the preceding chapter I touched upon the chief of these offences: speculation and economic espionage. It only remains to be added here that

the law in regard to the latter offence has lately been strengthened. It now provides that any person found guilty of collecting and imparting to foreign Powers, anti-revolutionary organisations or private individuals, information of an economic nature, renders himself liable to imprisonment for three years with or without solitary confinement.

Such information need not necessarily be in the nature of a State secret. It may be information the communication of which is forbidden by various laws and decrees, or again, information of a kind which departmental heads, boards, and directors of trusts and companies have decided must not be divulged. In these circumstances economic investigation in Soviet Russia becomes a perilous undertaking.

The laws dealing with bribery and corruption are severe. This evil was by no means uncommon in old Russia; to-day it is rife from end to end of the country. For this moral decadence several causes exist. To begin with there is general poverty; "If you don't steal you can't live," people say. And as regards the system itself it may be said that it almost invites dishonesty. It is a system transitory between Socialism and Capitalism, but the majority of those whom the Government entrusts with the working of it are individuals steeped in the practice and traditions of the Capitalist order, individuals who in their own hearts believe in private enterprise and have no faith in socialistic ideals. Consequently, the G.P.U. has to maintain unceasing vigilance throughout all departments of state trade and industry. Its spies are placed in every factory, shop and office, and all engaged in these enterprises, from the managing director down to the office boy or hall-porter, are never free from the uncomfortable feeling that they are under constant surveillance.

Scandalous transactions have been brought to light from time to time. In one instance a man, well known in business circles, and of evil repute, succeeded in worming his way into the management of a State textile trust over which he ultimately assumed dictatorial powers, with the result that swindling on a gigantic scale took place. In another trust defalcations were discovered to the extent of three million gold roubles (£300,000). The managers had sold

goods to a group of private traders with whom they had been in business partnership in pre-revolutionary days at prices well below market value, and had entered into numerous engagements which had resulted in a loss to the State. This method of robbing the Government is common in Russia. Business men whose enterprises have been confiscated by the State and whose services have subsequently been enlisted in its employ, are tempted to put the interests of their former associates before those of their new master, the State. They thus enrich themselves and their old friends while getting the satisfaction of revenge. One case heard in the courts brought to light the fact that a large Government Store in Moscow had purchased at fantastic prices a quantity of rotten timber at the instance of its legal adviser, a well-known lawyer of the old *régime* who, at the same time, was advising the firm who were the vendors of the timber. When the person responsible to the Government for the transaction was asked why he had trusted a man who knew nothing of timber, all he could answer was: "Because his name was well known as a lawyer in pre-revolutionary days!" Dozens of similar cases could be cited.

The punishments inflicted for bribery and corruption are of the severest kind. Many officials of the State Trusts have been shot, others have been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment; while the lesser offenders have been sent to exile in Siberia.

In any criticism of the severity of Bolshevik methods, we must always remember that the Russian masses have no idea of discipline, no definite standards of honesty, no conception of duty either to the State or the individual. Let me cite one or two casual examples of what I mean. In the Government hotel where I stayed there was a youth whose duty it was to attend to passport visas. On the first occasion when I required his services, he overcharged me and pocketed the difference. On the second occasion I protested, whereupon he coolly reduced the charge, but said that I would have to wait until the day before I took my departure to get the visa—the delay was his revenge.

I desired to purchase a railway ticket. The clerk in the

booking office said : " This is a proletarian country. You must stand in the queue."

I was glad to meet with such fairness. But while I stood in the queue I saw numerous people going to a side door, and when it came to my turn and all the tickets were sold I realised that transactions " behind the scenes " were the rule.

I travelled in an ordinary truck that night. Next time I wanted to travel I paid the porter of the hotel a substantial commission, and secured a place in the train without difficulty.

All foreigners are looked upon as millionaires, and in restaurants and elsewhere are charged prices much higher than those asked from Russians. The State struggles hard against this dishonesty, but it is in the blood of the people. The Russian masses have certainly got the Government they deserve.

Mention has yet to be made of the laws relating to religious observances. These laws, as with all other laws intended to preserve the dictatorship, are designed on the principle of casting the net as wide as possible. For example, it is laid down that whosoever utilises the religious superstition of the masses in order to plot against the Government of Workers and Peasants, or to instigate resistance to the laws and decrees of the said Government is liable to solitary confinement for not less than three years; and at the same time all the vague laws contained in other parts of the Code against counter-revolutionary activity may be held to cover any words or deeds of the clergy to which the authorities take exception. Finally, the teaching of religious doctrine to persons under age in public and private schools is punishable by hard labour for a maximum period of two years.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE SOVIET POLICE COURTS

DURING the course of a conversation one of the chief officials at the Commissariat of Justice said to me: "The laws of this country are devised mainly in the interests of the working man. The criminal laws express a class policy. If a working man commits a crime because he is the victim of circumstances, then he is judged with kindness. But if he is guilty of an offence that does injury to the whole proletarian class, it is different; he is punished accordingly. A merchant who commits an offence to enrich himself is severely dealt with. Abroad you say that your laws are national; here we say that they are class laws.\* We go upon the principle that property must have a social function. The question of individual right does not enter into the matter."

The Judiciary is organised upon class principles. In every town or district there are People's Courts. The judges are for the most part working men who have had at least two years' responsible political work, or individuals who have had not less than three years' experience in one of the judicial departments. It follows that nearly all the judges are Communists. Each judge is usually assisted by two assessors, who are drawn from the membership of the Trades Unions and take the place of jurymen. The People's Courts hear civil as well as criminal cases.

Above the People's Court is the Provincial Court, which acts as a Court of Appeal (or Cassation) and hears all serious cases, both civil and criminal. The President of the Cassation Department is a jurist and most of the judges of the Court are Communists, but of higher rank than

\* Class distinction in the Courts led to a great increase in crime, and a movement is now on foot to abolish it.

those who serve as judges in the lower Court. And finally there is a Supreme Court, the judges of which are tried and trusted old men who adhered to the Communist Party not later than 1919. The President is a jurist. The criminal branch of the Court hears all cases of high importance to the State, including charges of counter-revolutionary activity, and of bribery and corruption against high officials. It is this Court which has imposed so many death sentences for political offences.

When Militant Communism was abandoned and the new Economic Policy introduced, the Judiciary which I have described was substituted for the Revolutionary Tribunals which had summary powers of life and death over the population. But although these powers have been curbed (or readjusted) the Courts still remain revolutionary tribunals, constituted in such a manner as to render them effectual instruments of class war.

Lawyers are permitted to practise in the Courts. I spoke with one, and suggested that perhaps it might be a good thing for him were he to specialise in the representation of foreigners. He smiled rather grimly and replied: "I want to sleep in my bed at nights." And later I learned from several foreigners who had business with the Russian Courts that after a diligent search they had been unable to find any lawyer courageous (or foolish) enough to appear for them.

I spent some time in one of the People's Courts in Moscow. It was held in a small room in a wooden building; the judge, a man of middle-age with a capable face and obviously of proletarian origin, sat at a small table, covered with a red cloth, which was placed on a raised platform; on either side of him were seated two working women, also middle-aged, who acted as assessors. They looked intelligent and alert, but were silent throughout the proceedings. On the wall at the back of the judge and his assistants were hung the twin portraits everywhere to be seen, one of Lenin, the other of Karl Marx. . . . My thoughts went back to Lenin living in a mean house in Bloomsbury and wandering in the British Museum Library and to Marx living in Soho and buried in Highgate Cemetery.



JUDGES OF THE SUPREME COURT, ALL COMMUNISTS.



TRIAL OF A NOTED COMMUNIST, KRASNOSCHOKOV, AND HIS ASSOCIATES  
FOR THE MISAPPROPRIATION OF FUNDS BELONGING TO A BANK.





The public sat on benches arranged in rows in the body of the room and along the walls at either side. Of what class or classes it was composed, it was impossible to determine from external appearances; for everyone was dressed shabbily.

A few cases such as come before a London Police Court every day were heard. A couple who had lived together for twenty-five years suddenly resolved to marry. The wedding was made the occasion for a drunken carousal. The charge against the man was that he had illicitly possessed himself of a supply of vodka. His repentance bordered on the abject, and the judge let him off with a light fine, whereupon he left the Court in great joy shouting: "And now for another celebration!"

At this moment there entered into the Court a young Jew at whom everyone stared, for he was dressed in a manner most conspicuous in Russia. He wore a neat blue suit, from the carefully creased trousers of which peeped out fawn spats, the true hall-mark of the bourgeoisie. Had he been in rags no one would have looked twice at him.

It turned out that he was a merchant—a N.E.P. man—who had gone away on a business visit, leaving his flat in charge of the porter. When he returned he discovered that it had been robbed, and circumstantial evidence pointed to the porter as the culprit.

The case was called on. The porter, a young man with a sheepish face, got up from his place among the public and stood in front of the judge; and a lawyer, who represented the merchant and who looked pale and wore a threadbare overcoat, came out from somewhere and, standing within arm's length of the accused, began to tell his story.

(In the Russian Courts, I should explain, there are no prisoners' docks and no witness nor other boxes.)

The hearing was conducted with scrupulous fairness, and the procedure resembled that employed in the police courts of this country.

The judge and the two assessors retired to a little ante-room to consider their decision. Immediately everyone began to talk with his neighbour. The accused porter related his evidence all over again. Angry glances were

thrown in the direction of the Jewish prosecutor. And some soldiers began to point at him and murmur: "What right has a 'bourjoui' to accuse him?" (meaning the porter, of course) and "He ought to be shot!" At this stage the Jew slipped out of Court. Occasionally policemen brought in prisoners to be tried and conducted them to a little railed-off space, whence they too joined in the general conversation, sometimes laughing and joking as if they had no care in the world.

When the judge and the assessors re-entered everyone stood up respectfully. The case was dismissed. A crowd gathered round the porter and congratulated him. And the Jew quickly vanished. Thus ended the proceedings for the day.

I have collected some typical Court cases, of which the following are examples:

A divorce trial is taking place; the husband is a Communist, the wife describes herself as "non-party." The Court is filled with injured women who all feel themselves drawn together by common suffering. When the judges retire to arrive at a decision a general conversation begins. Says one woman: "There is nothing but cruelty and flightiness in the world. Men produce lots of babies, that's all. And then they throw us over for the first new-comer."

Looking on with a detached air is a young woman. Her legs are crossed, and her impudent stare and pose annoy everyone.

The women present address her as "Princess," the men giggle and call her "hot-stuff." She has been the cause of more than one family tragedy.

The woman who is suing her husband for divorce remarks: "I am not like this one—dressed up. How could I be? I've babies to look after. I have to live in the kitchen—not like this stupid snake with her charms." (The woman in the case is wearing a striped pink dress.)

The husband sits in the Court and listens to all this criticism. Suddenly he shouts: "I don't know! Perhaps even this child is not mine."

As he speaks he points to an infant which his wife is

carrying in her arms. At once there is a chorus of voices in the Court: "You scoundrel!"

A woman with a cheeky expression on her face gets on her feet and exclaims: "Let them go to hell, all the husbands. What do they do now? Marry at one table and divorce at another."

A woman asks for a divorce from her husband because he has left her to live with his niece. The mother of the niece gives evidence, describing how the man, her brother, gave an expensive present to the girl, the expensive present consisting of a pair of shoes. Whereupon an old woman, whose wrinkled face reminds one of a baked apple, audibly remarks: "Oh! the sinner—the sinner! This is the result of one of those anti-religious fumes."

In another case a peasant has deserted his wife after living with her for fourteen years. The land did not provide a subsistence, and he went to Moscow to look for work and fell into temptation. Afterwards he visited the village and stripped his wife of everything, even her earrings and shoes, which he presented to the other woman. There are two children, a boy and a girl, the custody of whom is desired by the wife.

The husband objects: "She is religious," he says.

But the public has no sympathy with this plea. "You—a Communist!" exclaims one voice in a tone of disgust. "You ought to be kicked out of the Party!" adds another.

Some youths are fined for singing obscene songs in the street; and a number of young men are sentenced to terms of imprisonment, ranging up to two years and six months, for seeking to escape service in the Red Army. It was said that they had taken poisons which caused them to suffer from "a strange disease!"

And so ended one day's proceedings in the People's Court.

Let us pay a visit to another Court. An old woman is on trial for assault. Her daughter aged sixteen had married without her blessing (so it was said) a Communist youth who had persuaded his bride to join the Party; the

ceremony took place at the Registry Office, not at the church.

The old mother was angry, called the girl an atheist, and accused her of having abandoned God. "You think yourself learned," she said, "and you don't consider your parents at all. You Godless child!"

There was disputation in the household from morning until night. At last the mother could stand it no longer. She hurled a frying-pan containing hot potatoes at her child, exclaiming: "I'll beat God's faith into you! I'll show you!" and inflicted severe burns on her face.

The Court sentenced her to two months' imprisonment, but considering that she was "a dark non-realising peasant woman," released her on a promise to be of good behaviour.

The next case is a real tragedy. A Red Army judge has to leave his wife to undertake official duties in another town. The woman is a frivolous creature who suffers from boredom when left alone. Soon she falls in love with a boy of fifteen years who pays her attention. The boy is desperately serious, and urges her to divorce her husband and marry him. She agrees, but makes various excuses for putting off the day. Five years pass; and at last she consents and secures a divorce. But soon she is bored again, and goes back to her husband. Knife in hand, the youth sets out to murder her; but seeing the terrified look in her eyes he turns away from her and stabs her husband and kills him. The Court is merciful; five years' imprisonment is the sentence.

The recital of another tragedy follows; it is a tragedy such as might have been taken from the pages of Dostoevsky.

A peasant woman (who had a son) was newly-married. She was accused of stealing a chemise. The relatives of her husband heard of the matter and spread the evil news. She was afraid lest her offence should come to the knowledge of her husband. And so she determined to commit suicide; she would hang both herself and her son. Taking the boy with her, she went to a barn. There she hanged the youth by a rope from a beam. But before he was dead she was seized with pity for him, and cut the rope and took him down. But she could not contemplate his remaining



alive were she to be dead. Her love was too great for that. So she hanged him again, and to make doubly sure of the result took up an axe and chopped his head in two.

Then she fell into a faint. On coming to again she went to a place in the ice, where there was a hole, through which she tried to squeeze herself—but she was too stout to pass through. Then she fled into the deep forest, hoping that there she would freeze to death. But after two days' suffering she returned to the village and buried herself deep in a hay-stack. When at the point of suffocation she was discovered by her husband. Again the Court was merciful; the sentence was five years' imprisonment.

Another case was concerned with miracles. A village church had just been renovated, and it was decided to hold a service in celebration of the completion of the work. Before the appointed day a peasant, who was the principal singer in the church choir, declared that, while praying in his own house before an ikon, he saw with his own eyes the restoration of this old painting to a state of perfection. The announcement caused a sensation in the village. It was decided that the ikon must be deposited in the church and blessed in the presence of the bishop; but as the bishop could not come on the day chosen, the ceremony had to be postponed, and the ikon remained where it was. From far and near peasants arrived on a pilgrimage to the spot, bringing with them offerings of various products of the soil. Then strange rumours began to spread; it was said that all ikons which had been seized by the Bolsheviks from a well-known monastery in the district had mysteriously been returned, and that the end of the world was coming. The blessing of the ikon which had been the cause of all the excitement took place later in the church; the bishop did not come himself but sent a priest to perform the ceremony. Thereupon, the agents of G.P.U. seized the ikon and arrested its owner, together with the priest. As the latter was being carried off his wife shouted: "You are taking away one ikon, but hundreds more will appear."

After that ikons were miraculously restored in all parts of the village; in one woman's house no fewer than ten

ikons revived all at once. And the wife promptly got up a petition to the G.P.U. (which all the faithful signed) demanding the release of the arrested men. In this petition it was written: "The people must be freed because the revival of the ikons was accomplished, not by human effort, but by divine force." Wholesale arrests followed; and all the ikons were seized and submitted to the examination of experts, chemists, artists, and jewellers. But the only theory that could be advanced was that they had been hastily cleaned and repainted by some human hand. Finally, the bishop was arrested and together with twenty-seven other persons, priests and peasants, was tried for counter-revolutionary activities. The bishop was sentenced to two years' exile; the priests to one year's imprisonment; while the peasants were allowed to go free on the ground that they had been "ignorant and non-realising."

In another case, where a Communist had persistently ill-treated his wife, he pleaded to the Court: "Don't sentence me. If you do my wife will be right. She said when the ikons were taken out of the house that everything would go wrong."

But the magistrates were not deceived by this cunning.

A third case was also concerned with religion. A man, who resided with his mother, invited a woman to live with him as his wife. The mother, who was of a very religious disposition, could not tolerate this arrangement. Again and again she urged her son to give up leading a non-Christian life, and to turn "this sinful woman" out of the house. The son refused, and so one day she killed the woman. "I did it to save my son from sin," she said. Then, by an offer of the dead woman's clothing, she persuaded a neighbour to help her to convey the corpse on a sledge into the depths of the forest. Afterwards she went to the priest, confessed her crime and received forgiveness and a blessing. In the Spring the snow in the forest melted and the body was found. All three were arrested, the two women and the priest (the latter for concealing the crime), and were given long terms of imprisonment.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

I HAD several long conversations with the Chief of the Militia (or Police) in Moscow. He was a young man with a thoughtful face and a quiet manner; the impression he made upon me was a good one. He told me that the Militia had a Trade Union of their own, that they were given a general as well as a political education and that they were officered by workmen or peasants.

The Militia, I should add, are controlled by the Commissariat of the Interior just as the police in this country are controlled by the Home Office. But, as their name implies, they are a semi-military force. They are heavily armed. And the uniform which they wear (black with red facings) resembles the uniform of a soldier more than it does that of a policeman. They perform all the patrol and point duties usually undertaken by police, but in the event of emergency could easily be formed into military units capable of quelling local tumult. They are a separate body from the G.P.U., of whose sinister activities I have spoken in a previous chapter. The G.P.U. is an institution unto itself, and maintains its own police, spies and soldiers.

I have seen the official regulations describing the duties and powers of the Militia. Page after page of these regulations are an almost exact reproduction of the sinister regulations issued to the police under the old *régime*; the vocabulary made use of in the one is a repetition of that employed in the other. In the Bolshevik publication it is plainly set forth that the purpose in view is to realise socialism. Apparently it makes no difference whether the system be Socialism or Tsarism. In both instances the principles of autocracy had to be upheld, and therefore, despite the Revolution, no need arose to vary police routine.

Instructions are given to the police that they must keep their ears open for revolutionary propaganda, that they must pay frequent visits to all houses and flats, and carefully inspect the register of occupants, that they must work in association with the porters of these habitations, whose duty it shall be to give information as to politically unreliable residents and lodgers. Furthermore, the police are instructed that they must prevent the discharge of fire-arms by private persons in the streets to the danger of passers-by, but only one solitary regulation is made in regard to the use of revolvers carried by the policemen themselves. Permission is given to shoot any wild animals that may appear in the street; since the Bolshevik Revolution wolves have frequently penetrated into the towns.

The Chief of the Militia told me quite frankly that thieving and dishonesty were widely prevalent. Horse-stealing on the frontiers was of common occurrence, and an enormous traffic was done in contraband. Abundant proof of the latter statement was visible in the shops. Foreign trade is a monopoly of the State in Soviet Russia. Consequently, smuggling has developed into an immense business. If an article of taste or quality is to be seen, it may be assumed that it has been introduced into the country in this manner. For the State only imports from abroad and produces at home useful articles, luxuries of all kind being banned. But, unfortunately, the State has not yet understood as it should that usefulness and beauty can be combined, nor has it strengthened its own industries sufficiently to produce both cheaply and well. Here then in a Socialist State is ample scope for individual enterprise in the form of contraband trade.

The fact is that the Socialist State has not at its disposal enough wealth to enable anyone to live in tolerable conditions. Hence many individuals are driven to make war upon socialist society. Wide as is the net spread by the G.P.U. and the Militia, these forces cannot adequately protect either state or private property. Hence outside every shop, every bank, and in fact all business premises, a watchman armed with a rifle sits all night long. Very often a young proletarian student, occupied at the Uni-



versity during the daytime, takes up this job as a means of getting a scanty livelihood. In most of the houses where double entrance doors are provided, these doors are now kept closed and locked as a protection, not against the cold, but against a visitation of thieves; and with the same purpose, as well as to effect an economy in upkeep, where two staircases exist, the back staircase only is used. Few of these staircases are lighted at night, for electricity is a luxury and bulbs are expensive and can easily be carried off. Most occupants of flats or dwellings, fearing to open the door to any caller, have arranged among themselves, or with their friends and acquaintances, that the bell be rung a given number of times as a signal that no evil is intended.

In the country lawlessness also is widely prevalent, but it is more crude than that of the towns, more in the nature of mediæval crime. Horse-stealing has been mentioned as of frequent occurrence. But bandittism is also very largely practised. The Ukraine is overrun with mounted robbers, whose motives are political as well as criminal. Included among them, I was told, were many individuals belonging to the old intelligentsia, not only ex-officers, but also lawyers, doctors, actors and so forth who had been driven to desperation by starvation and suffering. Their spy system was well organised. They had agents in the towns who informed them of trains on which Bolsheviks proposed to journey. These trains were held up by the bands, and the Bolsheviks among the passengers identified, taken out, and shot in the nearest forest; the rest of the passengers were searched and their money or valuables taken away.

Once I travelled from Leningrad to Kiev. As soon as we came to the Ukrainian frontier the train was boarded by a detachment of Red Guards. A Bolshevik who was travelling with me, and who had several trunks, full of clothes, which he had recently brought from abroad for his relatives in the South, confessed to feeling a little nervous.

One of the soldiers asked each person in the compartment whether he had possession of any firearms. No one replied in the affirmative. As soon as the soldier turned his back, the Bolshevik confided that he was carrying a revolver, but

as he had no permit to do so, he had been afraid to answer truthfully.

"A good job you didn't do so," said a travelling companion with whom he had become friendly. "It wasn't the permit he was bothering about. If he had found out that you had a revolver, then your name would have been taken, and you would have been called upon to help the soldiers if the train should be attacked."

The number of petty offences against the law is very large, far more so than in any country in the world. This is not surprising. As I have said, a socialist state in its inception is bound to be a police state. And such is the name freely applied to the Soviet *régime* by the Russians themselves. Although private enterprise is permitted on a restricted scale, it is the policy of the authorities to see that it does not compete successfully with State enterprise. Consequently, all the laws which tend to keep its development within bounds are rigorously enforced. Then the State is poverty-stricken and cannot allow the least delay in the payment of taxes. For the same reason it has to get its rents in promptly; for it has nationalised nearly everything and has thus become the universal landlord.

The spirit of dictatorship is in the air. Local authorities frequently issue their own decrees, regardless as to whether or not they are acting within their powers in so doing. And what is more, the local Militia rigorously enforces these decrees.

I have before me two such examples of this local tyranny, both cited recently in the Bolshevik press. A number of people who failed to pay their taxes were fined, and, in addition, their property was seized. But this did not end the matter. As time went on and payment was not forthcoming, higher fines were imposed, and this process was repeated several times, until finally the defaulters were arrested. The local authorities were merciless throughout, and to the executive officials gave only one order: "Increase the pressure!"

In the second instance, the local sanitary organisation, in conjunction with the Militia, issued an elaborate and

arbitrary decree to the inhabitants of the district ordering them, under a penalty of 100 roubles, to fulfil a long list of hygienic requirements. In the courtyards of houses, lavatories and ashpits were to be built forthwith; in the dwellings themselves, spittoons and baskets for rubbish were to be provided; the benches on which people slept at nights were to be wiped with a wet rag daily; as a means of getting rid of bugs, beetles and insects of other kinds, the walls and ceilings were to be washed at regular intervals with water containing strong soda; and finally no linen was to be dried in the living rooms.

No doubt such a decree contains some admirable precepts. Incidentally, it throws light, not only upon the conditions of Russian life, but also upon the mentality of the Russian people, the rulers as well as the ruled. The rulers, we see, are rigid as are all Russians when they get a little power; more rigid, in fact, than the governing class of any other people. And, on the other hand, the destitution and depression which the Revolution brought in its train had a paralysing effect upon the spirit of the masses already enfeebled by centuries of poverty under the Imperial *régime*.

As a consequence, their inclination to let things slide got the better of them, and even intelligent people were forced to lead a life of squalid Bohemianism.

In these conditions the laws and decrees of a dictatorship claiming to be the advance guard of the Socialist State met with much evasion and resistance. Is it any wonder that nearly two million criminal cases are heard in the Courts annually, and that a large amount of crime goes undetected, especially in the villages? Here it must be borne in mind that what is a crime in Russia would not be a crime elsewhere; for there the State is endeavouring to control every single act of man, and to render him completely subservient to its will. And it is dealing with a people who have not the least idea what a state is. Hence the gaols are full to overflowing. It is a common sight to see in the street outside long queues of relatives waiting to visit the prisoners. All classes are represented, for, as I have said, the Soviet law casts its net very wide.

I visited a number of prisons, when my guide was the

Chief of the Prisons himself, a Jew in early middle age, who had a short black beard and wore gold-rimmed spectacles. All his movements were quick, while his eyes shone with keenness, and occasionally with kindliness. He was an enthusiast. His assistant accompanied us, but I did not take to him very much. He was a big, burly, clean-shaven man, mild and polite in speech to me, but a bully, so I thought.

We drove off in an automobile; the first prison that we visited, the Ivanovsky Prison, had formerly been a monastery. I caught sight of a number of religious paintings in a neglected condition, stacked up in the corridor; portraits of Lenin had taken their place on the walls. The church had been stripped of all its religious objects and was used as a reading room. The prisoners, when not employed, occupied the rooms which formerly were the cells of the monks. In each room there were four or five men—a doubtful privilege, perhaps, in a country where personal hygiene is not understood. They were allowed to wear their own clothes, to read newspapers, and to converse freely. During the day they worked in common at different useful occupations, shoe-making, carpentry and printing, and in return were given a small wage, from which the cost of food was deducted. They had their own Trade Union, and attended a school, where, as was only to be expected, the approved political course was included in the curriculum. Musical and literary circles, I was told, had been formed.

There were no bolts or bars (I presumed that both front and back doors were locked at night); the warders wore ordinary clothes and were indistinguishable from the prisoners; and the only precaution against escape was the posting of sentries some distance away within the walls forming the enclosure, but in such positions as to be out of sight of the prison itself. The atmosphere of the place was more like that of a factory than of a gaol. I could not say that the inmates looked happy, nor yet that their surroundings were cheerful. The fact that they were permitted to wear their own clothes no doubt had an importance for them. But they looked a rather shabby and dirty crowd, a fact not surprising in a country where even those who are







M. KRYLENKO.  
Chief Public Prosecutor.



PROFESSOR POKROVSKY.  
President of the State Science Soviet, and Assistant Commissar  
of Education.

free cannot dress too well. And the building itself looked shabby and dirty; it had not been renovated since the Revolution.

While on the way to another prison I entered into conversation with my guides. They told me that prisoners in Russia were now divided into three categories: (1) Those who were on trial to see whether they could be of good behaviour; (2) those who had successfully emerged from this trial, and who were rewarded with seven days' holiday once a year to enable them to visit their relatives; (3) those who had been thoroughly reformed and who were allowed a fortnight's leave once a year. He mentioned that there had been very few cases in which the prisoners had broken their promise to return.

"How many people are imprisoned in the whole of Russia?" I asked.

"Eighty thousand," was the reply.

"And does that include all political prisoners?"

I was assured that it did.

"Is attempted suicide a crime in Soviet Russia?" I inquired.

"No, it is not."

And just then we came within sight of a faded dark blue dome, sprinkled with golden stars, the dome of the Tagansky Monastery, now used as a women's prison. Here, too, the *régime* was light, the same in most respects as that of the men's prison which we had just visited. In one long room women of all ages were packed shoulder to shoulder. The task that they were engaged upon was the making of clothes for the Red Army. Groups of women, wearing shawls on their heads, were loitering about the corridor and the whole atmosphere of the place struck one as strangely free and easy. At once the Chief of the Prisons was recognised and a crowd of petitioners gathered round him. His behaviour towards them was very simple.

"I want less work and more pay!" demanded one.

"I'm on remand and yet I'm compelled to work just the same as the others," protested another.

A third remarked that she had often been in prison in the old Tsarist days, but she much preferred Soviet prisons.

As we left we passed through the monastery churchyard, threading our way in and out of the old tombstones, attached to which were some brightly-coloured ikons. . . . I thought again how times had changed.

"Are these the worst prisons you can show me? Is there not something more severe?" I asked.

A little conference followed; then we all entered the waiting motor-car and drove to the Sokolniki Prison, a large, red brick building which was used as a prison in the Tsar's days. Here, I found, the discipline was much more strict than in the prisons which I had just left. The warders were armed and in uniform and as we moved from place to place those on duty came up to the Chief of the Prisons, clicked their heels, saluted smartly, and made a verbal report as to the number and conduct of the prisoners in each section. During the day the inmates worked at various occupations, making weights for scales, boxes, boots, weaving cloth, and milling oats. At night they slept, several in a cell, as in other prisons, but the cells were real cells and the doors were bolted and barred. A balalaika orchestra and a choir had been organised; both performed for me, the former rendering with spirit the "Internationale," during which everyone present stood up and assumed a solemn expression. The choir was of first-class quality; one young tenor, with a good voice and a true sense of art, sang some Ukrainian airs, the gloomy refrain of which was appropriate to the surroundings. And then the balalaika orchestra concluded with a mad Russian dance. Finally we all—both the prisoners and the members of our party—had our photographs taken—why, I don't know.

I was told that I could ask the prisoners any questions. But I knew that this permission meant nothing, for prisoners are not likely to make complaints to a foreigner in the presence of those who control their fate. I remember that as we passed through one room I caught a glimpse of a man lying prostrate on the floor while some warders were tugging at him and urging him to get up. Just at that moment my guides quickened their pace. I attached little importance to the incident; naturally the Bolsheviks were anxious to show me that their prisons were conducted on humane



lines, and were embarrassed by an incident that marred their arrangements. I make no doubt that they strive to deal intelligently with all such offenders as do not seriously challenge their authority; harsher methods are reserved for those who do. Also I am quite well aware that I saw their most presentable prisons.

I talked with many people who had been in prison in Moscow—and who has not had the unhappy experience? Certainly most educated people in Russia, not of the Communist Party, have at some time or other been under arrest. “When I was in prison”—this is a commonplace of speech in Moscow and elsewhere. But most individuals who had undergone such experience confessed to me that they had no complaints to make about their treatment. . . . I heard different accounts of the more remote gaols and camps, particularly those hidden in the Far North and in Siberia. Here it was said that the most atrocious conditions of Tsarism (as described by Tolstoy, for example, in his *Resurrection*) had been repeated; thus indirectly confirming information which has filtered through to England from some of the unfortunate victims. I could not get permission to visit any of these out-of-the-way prisons or places of internment, nor to my knowledge have they ever been visited by a foreign delegation, Labour or otherwise.

## CHAPTER XXV

### MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

THE legend of the nationalisation of women in Russia is no longer believed. But nevertheless a vague notion is prevalent that Socialism does mean the destruction of the marriage tie and of family life generally. That there is some justification for this belief no one who has studied Russian conditions on the spot can doubt. Moreover, the Bolsheviki themselves candidly avow that their ultimate purpose is to abolish the family.

In the Soviet laws relating to marriage there is nothing that is not advocated by people who claim to hold advanced views in Western countries. A high official of the Commissariat of Justice remarked with a laugh to me: "It requires the consent of two people to get married, but only of one to get divorced." And the Soviet marriage laws are based upon this principle. The only form of legal marriage is registration with the civil authorities. Marriage in a church is not forbidden, but it has no legal sanction.

A woman who marries in Soviet Russia does not sacrifice her identity. Neither does she acquire nor abandon any privilege. In all respects she is the equal of her husband before the law; the duties and privileges of the citizeness differ in no wise from those of the citizen.

Free choice as to name is allowed. The couple may decide to take the name of either one or the other, or compound both names; if neither course should appeal to them, the husband may retain his own and the wife her own name. In a marriage with a foreigner both parties retain their own citizenship.

Should either husband or wife make a change of address, the other is not bound to follow. There is no community of property; the wife is just as much entitled to possess

property as the husband. And at the same time the woman's obligations are the same as those of the man. Should a husband be unable to work through illness, unemployment, or any other cause and the wife have the necessary means, she must support him, just as he must support her in like circumstances. The law of Soviet Russia deems a woman incapable of work at fifty and a man at fifty-five. If parents are needy, children can be compelled to support them. But parents have no rights in the property of children, nor have children rights in the property of parents. People who have poor relations are responsible for their maintenance.

Divorce is easy, speedy and inexpensive. It is sufficient that there is a desire for it. Should such desire exist on both sides intimation of the fact to the authorities, accompanied by evidence of marriage, will procure immediate release. When a divorce is desired by only one party, a hearing takes place at the local Court; but the proceedings are merely formal, and are mainly concerned with arrangements for maintenance. Appeal to the Court of Cassation is allowed. Even after divorce the obligation of one party for the maintenance of another, who may happen to be destitute, continues. As regards the children, maintenance is a mutual responsibility. But should it happen that one parent has no means, then the charge is placed wholly upon the other.

In determining the custody of the children the Court is influenced by political considerations. Usually, custody is given to a parent having proletarian sympathies, regardless as to whether or not such parent is responsible for maintenance.

There is no such thing as illegitimacy in Soviet Russia. Soviet law says: "A child is a fact and the basis of the family. There is no difference between a child of the married and a child of the unmarried."

The law of inheritance has been annulled. The Bolsheviks claim that by this act they follow to a logical end the precedent of bourgeois countries which limit the legal right of successorship to close relatives in the absence of whom the property passes to the State. In Russia, the whole estate of a deceased person becomes the property of the Republic with the exception of small estates, up to

the value of 10,000 roubles (about £1000). Two reasons are given for this exception. First, it is said that it would be inconvenient for the State to take a mass of small properties under its control; and secondly that, as the institution of the family still exists, and that as the State cannot as yet take upon itself the bringing up of children, free of all charge, or the maintenance of a deceased person's needy relative, some moderate provision for these purposes must be allowable by way of inheritance. But, it is pointed out, that though the dispersable total may be less, the circle of family beneficiaries is wider than permissible under the laws of bourgeois States. For, as I have just said, there is no illegitimacy of children in Soviet Russia, and the needs of relatives are satisfied before the demands of creditors, whereas in the West it is often the latter who devour the whole proceeds of an estate. Finally, in the division of property it is the need and not the nearness of a deceased person's relatives that is the determining factor. All these provisions are much to be commended.

The Bolsheviks claim that in imposing severe limitations upon the right of inheritance they have dealt a severe blow at the institution of private property, and that by putting an end to all possibility of gain after death, they have got rid of one great peril to life—the possibility of murder by interested persons whose motive is to benefit under wills.

Whether or not the Bolsheviks have dealt so severe a blow at private property as they imagine, remains to be seen. But it is not to be doubted that they have caused it much inconvenience. Under present conditions, private wealth has to be removed abroad, a difficult but not impossible operation; or, alternatively, it has to be distributed in the lifetime of its possessor. At the present time, there are not many men in Russia who at their death could leave an estate exceeding the value of £1000. The Bolshevik law of inheritance does not therefore trouble anyone too much. It is the Bolshevik method of government, not the Bolshevik law of inheritance, that dealt so severe a blow at the accumulation of wealth.

It is not suggested that the Soviet social laws are the laws



of a socialist community; in fact, it is claimed that they are so framed as to ensure that they shall not survive too long. The Soviet jurists have a contempt for the "eternal codes" of the bourgeoisie.

I have before me an interesting (and authoritative) treatise written on the subject by M. Horchburg, Chief Editor of the Board of Law and member of the Socialist Academy of Social Sciences in Russia. The writer says that the Soviet Government has been much criticised for retaining a marriage ceremony, even in so simple a form as registration. But he assures us that within a very short time this will be wiped out; even surnames will be abolished, when "a more reasonable distinction between people has been devised"—the "more reasonable distinction," it may be presumed, will be numbers. When that day comes the care of the children will pass exclusively to the State. Under the existing Soviet laws, parents who misuse their rights over children may be deprived of such rights. The children are then placed under the guardianship of the State, or of someone nominated by the State. M. Horchburg declares that "official guardianship ought to prove to parents that the social care of children gives much better results than individual, unscientific and irrational care of them by loving but ignorant parents who cannot have at their disposal those resources which society possesses. The State ought in this manner to make parents unlearn the narrow and unreasonable love which expresses itself in the desire to keep the children near themselves, to confine them to the limited circle of the family, to narrow their horizon of interests and to make of them, not members of the mighty community whose name is humanity, but self-loving, as themselves, individualists, placing in the foreground their own personal interests to the detriment of the interests of society."

"We live in a transition period between capitalist and socialist society," continues M. Horchburg. "The period of transition gives rise to conditions under which compulsory union of men and women will become quite superfluous. On the one side it makes easy the breaking at any moment of even the officially registered love-tie at the will

of either party. On the other it avoids the hypothetical evil of this ease, and that of the 'formless' tie by placing on the father equal duties towards the children. Complete equality of all children without distinction of birth is also a preparatory social-psychological step towards the extension to all children of the guardianship of society. This measure, preparing as it does for complete Socialism, deprives of its last support the middle-class notion of marriage with its privileges, its narrow family interests, its patriarchal limitations."

Nothing could be more illustrative of the tendency of Communist ideas on the marriage question than the attempt which was recently made to revise existing laws. A new law entitled the "Law of Family Rights" was drafted and received the approval of various government departments concerned and ultimately of the Council of Commissars. Its purpose was to place all forms of cohabitation on an equal basis, whether registered or unregistered. When finally it came before the Central Executive Committee it was the subject of much criticism from women delegates who pointed out that the effect of existing laws had been to loosen family ties and to deteriorate the position of women. Some men, they said, had married and divorced as many as ten women in the course of a year, and on each occasion marriage and divorce had been duly registered according to Soviet law. It was possible, remarked one delegate, to get married and divorced at the same table in a Government office.

Existing laws, it was urged, afforded little enough protection for women, and not more than one per cent. of those who were divorced had any prospects of securing maintenance. Nevertheless a certain amount of protection was implied in the compulsory formality of legal registration, and if this were now to be withdrawn the position of women would become quite hopeless. As a result of these objections, it was decided to defer consideration of the proposed measure (*see* Preface).

The main features of the Bolshevik laws have been outlined and it has been shown that these laws are regarded as

merely transitory, the ultimate purpose being to abolish even the present simple form of marriage and to place all children under the guardianship of the State. Such laws, it must be admitted, meet with the approval of many non-Bolshevik Russians. More than one person remarked to me that Western marriage laws amounted to hypocrisy, and that they could not understand how the continuance of the marriage tie could be insisted upon if there was no love between husband and wife. And in the Russia of pre-war revolutionary days, I often listened to similar views. In making divorce so easy the Bolsheviks unquestionably gave expression to intelligent Russian opinion.

The same is true in regard to their equalisation of the position of women, and of their abolition of illegitimacy of children; enlightened Russians were ready for these reforms.

In fact the Bolshevik attitude towards all problems arising from sex relationship has the full sanction of public opinion. This attitude is characterised by undisguised frankness. On one occasion I was detained in Yaroslavl, the historic old city on the Volga. Wandering round the town I came across a placard which announced in big black letters that a well-known professor would give a lecture in one of the largest halls, the subject being abortion. I made a point of attending the proceedings. The hall was filled from end to end with an audience composed of persons of all ages. At the end of the lecture there was a long discussion.

I attended a similar gathering in Leningrad. On this occasion the audience was composed of young men and women students. A professor said that both Aristotle and Plato favoured abortions. Aristotle, he added, had urged that an excess of births was inimical to the welfare of society, while Plato argued that abortions were preferable to a weak generation. The speaker also quoted a Roman poet who sang the praises of abortion, and among other facts mentioned that in one hospital alone in Leningrad the number of abortions had increased in ten years between 1903 and 1913 from 200 to 1350. At the end a vote was taken as to which was the wiser: "unrestrained motherhood" or abortion. The majority was in favour of mother-

hood. More women than men were present, and while all the women voted for motherhood, all the men were for abortion. So even in Soviet Russia, the most advanced among the women, the Bolshevik women students, recoil from the abandonment of motherhood. Similar meetings to those which I have described are frequently held all over the country.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the Bolshevik social organisation is the practice of abortions by State doctors in State hospitals. The number of such operations is enormous and is increasing; in many places it equals the total of births. In Moscow the number of abortions registered annually reaches 10,000. One province sent a recommendation to the Central Administration that abortion should be practised on all women who had produced or were likely to produce children undesirable for the State.

The authorities do not encourage the practice of abortion, and they even warn women who desire to resort to it of the danger they may be incurring. But if their advice be rejected the operation may be carried out in State institutions. Dr. Siemashko, the Commissar for Health, told me that in their decisions the authorities were guided by the social or economic considerations arising in each case. If it was evident that a woman could not afford to bear a child or that her health was such that it was dangerous for her or undesirable for the community that she should become a mother, then abortion was permitted. I gathered that the State was not over-careful in preliminary investigation. The idea seemed to prevail that the fewer children born in the existing conditions the better, and justification was always pleaded by reference to the number of abortions illegally and unskilfully carried out, not only in Russia of pre-revolutionary days, but also in Western countries at the present time. This last point was urged, not only in numerous lectures given up and down the country, but also in pamphlets on the subject to be found in all public places.

Dr. Siemashko also told me that information as to birth control is freely given by the authorities in Russia, particularly to persons in straitened circumstances, a definition



which, I should imagine, includes nearly the whole population. He also said that it was the intention of the Government to introduce a law rendering it obligatory for both parties to make a formal declaration of health before entering into a marriage contract. And just before I left Russia I happened to be in a notary's office where I saw a Red sailor and a young woman scanning a declaration of this nature. There was an expression of confused joy on their faces.

Sex-knowledge is taught in all schools. When I was in Moscow I visited two very interesting exhibitions. One of these was held in what was formerly the Foundlings Home in Moscow, one of the largest buildings in the city. Here were exhibited a number of coloured posters teaching all the facts of motherhood and illustrating how children should be reared; how neglect of hygiene leads to disease and death. These posters were true works of art. Never have I seen more telling propaganda in the interests of health. But I regret that in my wanderings through Russia I never came across these posters again. Apparently they have not a very wide circulation outside the exhibition. In my passage I observed this motto inscribed at the entrance to the room that was formerly a chapel: "Maternity is the social function of motherhood." How strange these words sounded in a land where the stifling of motherhood had become an institution of the State. And how typical of Soviet Russia the whole exhibition was—a glimmer of light in an illimitable expanse of darkness. But is it not important that the glimmer is there?

The other exhibition which I saw in Moscow ruthlessly exposed the evil results that follow the neglect of sexual hygiene, and imparted knowledge to the public such as is usually available only to doctors. The most realistic methods possible were made use of, highly-coloured wax figures illustrating hideous diseases.

In looking at them I could not help thinking how much more useful they were for the promotion of beauty in the world than the wax mannequins to be seen in shop windows.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION

WHENEVER I came into touch with family life in Soviet Russia I could not help seeing that a definite cleavage had taken place between the older and the younger generation. This applied to all sections of the community, including the workers. The parents among the latter, in spite of their revolutionary politics, retain many sober notions and habits—or bourgeois prejudices, to use a popular Russian term applied to the conventions of former times. But the children are scatter-brained little rebels, to whom the past is unknown, the present a carnival of joyous upheaval, and the immediate future something that promises the fulfilment of every human desire.

Many parents, as I have said before, strive hard to bring up their children in the old ways. But everything is against them; the disorderliness of life generally, and the revolutionary extravagance and romanticism with which the atmosphere is charged.

When I was in Moscow, Bukharin, the Bolshevik leader, delivered a speech in which these words occurred: "The fundamental root of our struggle is the modern organisation of the family. The children with their weak hands are destroying the old relations in the family organisation. They drag their parents into the Party."

Children have been known to summon meetings of parents. At first the parents refused to attend, but ultimately many of them gave way, and listened to Communist speeches delivered by their own children. In some instances where parents beat children the Communist children organised committees, consisting of themselves and factory workers, and went to the houses of these parents, remonstrated with them, and threatened prosecution if the beatings did not

cease. During Easter this year many children left their homes because they revolted against being sent to church.

Perhaps it is true, as Bukharin says, that the family is being destroyed. But can he be quite so sure that what is taking its place is any better or is even an advance towards the ideals which his own comrades profess? For it is officially admitted in Moscow that in spite of all the study circles, all the intensive propaganda, the average young Communist has not the least idea of the true meaning of Communism, and his elders are too ignorant to explain it to him. Depravity, and all the diseases to which depravity gives rise, are widely prevalent amongst the young generation. Lunarchasky, who presides over education in Russia, said recently that the Communist youth regard sexual relationship with no more seriousness than the drinking of a glass of water. And there are many child patients in the hospitals for venereal diseases, some as young as eight years. That is an alarming state of affairs; for Bolshevism is at present sustained by the old guard, whose virility is wearing out, and if it cannot depend upon the future generation to continue its experiment, what is to happen?

As a consequence of propaganda many young Communists came to regard marriage as a bourgeois prejudice. A Comsomol girl recently wrote a letter to a Bolshevik newspaper, in which she said that she was being pursued by a young man who told her that love and marriage were stupid bourgeois inventions, and that the true Marxian paid no heed to such nonsense. Whereupon the bewildered girl asked: "Can it be that men and women were intended to behave like beasts?"

In the villages many Communist girls who lived virtuous lives were taunted with being bourgeois, and it was said of them that they refused to take their place with the masses. Numerous peasant girls consented to live with young men for no other reason than that these young men took them to towns where facilities for study were available. Thus knowledge was rated higher than virtue. The authorities now recognise that the campaign against bourgeois prejudices has had lamentable results, and they are doing all that is possible to cleanse the Comsomol movement, but

it has come to be recognised that the greater part of the younger generation has been irretrievably ruined.

I had a long talk with the late Patriarch Tikhon. He confirmed what I had heard on many sides, that whereas old and middle-aged people remained faithful to religion, atheism had taken a very strong hold upon the younger generation. This applies to the younger generation of the towns much more than it does to that of the country. I visited many villages, and always found the churches well attended by the peasant youth. But in the towns most children do not know what religion is. All that they have learnt concerning it has been gained from Bolshevik cartoons and pamphlets. Thus they regard it as something essentially ridiculous, something to be made fun of. At the same time, their heads are swimming with theatrical ideas of revolution, and, as restraints have never been imposed upon them nor any clear system of ethics taught to them, can one wonder that they have become savage little rebels who see in all authority hostility to the rights of the rising generation, or, to use the jargon of the Revolution, exploitation of the weak by the strong? Many tragedies have been the consequence. Hundreds of girls while still of school age have become mothers. When I was in Lenin-grad I was told of one such case where a mere child who was about to undergo this adventure ran to her school teacher for advice.

"Be calm!" was the answer she received. "The State will look after your baby. Remember you are living in a Soviet and not in a bourgeois country."

Of course no one in his senses would pretend that the Bolshevik leaders encourage immorality; but so daring are the teachings of many of their disciples that when they are misunderstood very sad results ensue.

As with so many social problems in Russia, the problem of the rising generation is so vast that the Soviet Government, deeply impoverished as it is, cannot hope to find a solution. The worst has yet to be told. What could be more terrible than the plight of the million or more little orphans of the Revolution and famine, who roam the towns and the countryside, getting a shadow of an existence by begging and







MOSCOW WAIFS.



ABANDONED CHILDREN IN MOSCOW.

stealing, and sleeping at night in all sorts of dark nooks and corners, with often no more covering in the depth of winter—the Russian winter—than old newspapers? Many of them have been found at night sheltering in cemeteries. Thus it might be said that in Soviet Russia the places of the dead have become the homes of the living.

No more vivid language could be used to describe the fate of these vagrant children than that employed by M. Lunarchasky, the Commissar of Education, in the course of an appeal for help made as recently as May, 1925. "Hundreds of thousands of them," he said, "have degenerated into a state of semi-savagery, some bordering on idiocy, while others have had their wits so sharpened by collision with life that they have become dangerous enemies of Society."

"This problem," he continued, "is the most terrible ulcer on the Soviet Union's body." And in the *Isvestia*, about the same time, a M. Popoff wrote that "every child who lives comfortably enjoying his parents' tender caresses, would to-morrow, if his parents died, be placed on a level with these homeless hungry vagrants."

In the country these children run wild in gangs like packs of wolves, and are regarded by the population as human lice rather than as human beings. In the towns they roam about in groups. They smoke, drink and play cards; indeed they commit every vice that it is possible for creatures to commit. Many of them lost their parents early in the Revolution; and have been living on their wits ever since, a period of eight or nine years. All classes in the community were involved in this calamity; not a few of the degraded little urchins wandering the streets to-day bear the names of noble families. Not a few are the children of factory workers.

I have never seen objects so pitiful as these little outcasts. I do not speak so much of the wretched rags and tatters which only partially hide most of their nakedness from the eye, but of their puffed out and cunning-looking faces that remind one of the faces of middle-aged *roués*. It is even more distressing to talk with them than to look at them. "You can't live if you don't swindle." "I'm sick

of women." "I know how to deal with people." Such phrases were common on the lips of these little wastrels. But though their minds are polluted and their bodies despoiled, their hearts are still childish. Even the evil that they do has upon it the stamp of *naïvété*. If they know how to rob, and how to make use of filthy language, they have not forgotten how to play nor how to prattle.

The Bolshevik Government is doing what it can for them. Special children's homes have been established in different regions, particularly along the line of the railways. Some of these institutions are conducted on the lines of the most advanced educational experiments in the West. I visited one such institution at Kiev, where both boys and girls were cared for. The children were given a good general education, and were taught useful handicrafts, while much attention was also bestowed upon their physical condition. Those who had charge of them were obviously devoted to their work. It would have been impossible to find anywhere a more healthy or happy community.

As might only be expected, all these children's homes in Russia are intensive propaganda centres. In the Kiev establishment the children had their own Soviet, the Chairman of which was a little autocrat, obeyed by all the others. They had also their own balalaika orchestra, which gave a spirited rendering of martial revolutionary airs.

Ikons of "Uncle" Lenin were enshrined in every room, and the children were taught to regard him as a mystical benefactor to themselves and the saviour of all the World. Posted up in the reading room was a "Wall Gazette," written by the children themselves. It contained, among other sketches, a drawing of a triumphant working man, bearing a Red Flag, before whom a bourgeois gentleman (dressed in black) was in ignominious flight, and little efforts in composition, of which the following is a literal sample:

"Down with the gentry! Down with the lazy! We don't want them. Better take a Red Banner in our hands and walk it through the whole city singing a jolly song; and we will stand on top."

Most of the children must have been little more than



infants when the Revolution occurred; and consequently their memories concerning the old gentry cannot be too clear. But I observed that their welcome to the "new gentry" was very warm. The "new gentry" were, of course, the Communists, some of whom accompanied me on my visit.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### FAMILY LIFE; THE POSITION OF WOMEN

WHAT has been the effect of the new revolutionary laws? Are the people of Soviet Russia more or less clean-living than the people of those other countries, called bourgeois by the Bolsheviks? Is family life disappearing, as it is intended to disappear? Have women gained by their political and legal equality with men? And how about the children?

The Revolution was a moral cataclysm. Families were broken up by death and dissension; or were flung apart by the accident of circumstance. Hunger emaciated soul as well as body; it was common for the members of a family to hate one another for no other reason than that there was so little food to go round; and when virtue was the last asset left its price went down to almost nothing. It was a time for finding out, and being found out.

All the couples who had long endured disharmony at once rushed to take advantage of the easy divorce facilities of the new *régime*. No statistics are available as to the number of marriages dissolved in those days; it must have been enormous. But I have figures for 1922; the total in that year was 122,479.

The delirium of the Revolution has now spent itself. Life is still abnormal, very abnormal when compared with Western standards. But Russians, haunted by the unforgettable memories of the worst years, find it bearable at least.

Their satisfaction is merely relative, for the economic conditions are indescribably bad. In spite of what the poets say, poverty and virtue rarely abide together. The Bolsheviks assert that the same is true of wealth and virtue. Perhaps they are right. But vice in a setting of squalor is peculiarly loathsome. And so it is in Russia. The whole

of Russia has become one vast slum, and the evils that prevail are of the kind usually associated with slum-life. Some people say that the laxity of the Bolshevik laws is very largely to blame. But I was told that the pace of divorces has now somewhat slowed down, and that the number of marriages lately dissolved is not "excessively large." I made careful inquiries on all sides and I am persuaded that I have not been misinformed. Prostitution is certainly less in evidence than it is in the West. But it is greatly on the increase; this was a fact plainly noticeable. Dr. Siemashko, the Commissar for Health, told me that in the days of Militant Communism no prostitutes were to be seen in the streets, but that since the New Economic Policy, since, in a word, Capitalism had returned, they had reappeared. It was evident that he regarded prostitution as an evil of Capitalism. Other people remarked to me that in the days of Communism the poverty was so bad that no prostitute could have possibly got a livelihood.

Dr. Siemashko said that prostitutes were now taken off the streets and employment was found for them by the State. If they returned to their evil ways they were sent to special colonies to be reformed; and in most instances a "cure" was effected. But, as I have said, there is now a good deal of prostitution in Russia, though it is much less in evidence than in any Western country.

The position of women on paper could not be bettered; it is all that the most advanced feminist could desire. But in reality it is far from being a happy one. The State decrees equality of opportunity; but no such thing exists. Unemployment amongst men is enormous, and amongst women it is still worse. Even the British Trades Union Delegation which studied conditions in Russia in 1924 reported that 40 per cent. of the unemployment was represented by women, and that women were still being thrown out of employment in large numbers. This they rightly interpreted as a refusal of the equal right of work to women, and mentioned that the result had been increased prostitution.

It is strange that despite the theoretical friendliness of the Revolution towards women it should have done so little for

them. Lenin said: "Every cook must be capable of governing the State." But it is part of the Bolshevik's creed that cooking in the home, and indeed all household drudgery, must be done away with. Hence they have established Communal dining-rooms, where members of Trades Unions can get cheap meals; and their aim is to make marriage no more than a co-partnership arrangement on a non-legal basis, the care of the children devolving upon the State. But as there is little employment available for women outside the home, household drudgery remains. And it is all the more slavish because of the terrible overcrowding, wretched sanitary arrangements and the dilapidated state of dwellings.

Another curious fact is that the Revolution has produced no great women. Mme. Lenin is interested in education and social welfare, Mme. Kamenev looks after the child-orphans of the Revolution, and Mme. Trotsky is responsible for the care of the nation's art treasures, and everyone speaks well of her. But none of these—and of all the Bolshevik women they are the most capable—has attained to the eminence of her husband. Women are much in evidence in Government Departments, but they occupy positions as minor martinets, secretaries and typists, positions of a nature similar to those filled by women in other countries. In the G.P.U. they are more prominent. But the G.P.U. is a special department, manned by people of a quite special character.

For the rest the Revolution has enabled women to behave as men do in all respects if they so desire. But it has given them no more economic independence than they possessed formerly. Theory is one thing, life another.

Russian women were always inclined to be assertive. Now they are even more so than before. To have proof of this one has only to observe the behaviour of those employed on the tram-cars. They order the passengers about with the vigour of drill sergeants. And the strange thing is that most of them are conspicuously small in stature. But every woman cannot be a tram conductor. And assertiveness without the means wherewith to live does not carry anyone very far.



In all the towns of Russia (and particularly in Moscow) there are a large number of derelict women. I do not speak here of street prostitutes, but of women whose married lives came to grief in the Revolution and who are unable to find a means of subsistence. Naturally, these women are very bitter. The law, it is true, permits them to claim support from their husbands if they are in need. But everyone is poor in Russia, and if husband and wife do not get on well together they are much worse off economically when apart. And as usual it is the woman who suffers most. Then there are the children; despite the State's beneficent intentions the disposal and support of them is always a tragic problem where divorces have taken place. There are, I think, more sorrowing women in Moscow than in any other city in Europe.

If women have little respect for men, men have not much more for women. Soviet Russia is eagerly discussing the problem of the modern woman. But there it is fantastically complicated by the effects of the Revolution. In one of the Bolshevik publications (a sober review) I read an article on the subject which began in this way: "Women have made themselves altogether too cheap. There is no longer any mystery about them. Since they bobbed their hair they have revealed the fact that their heads are small, ill-shaped, and flat at the back; no longer have we any illusions about them. Certainly it is not necessary to have them always with us." And I read similar remarks in other publications; it was evident that cynicism on sex questions was the correct thing. Artzibashev's "Sanin" still lives, and the book is sold freely on the streets of Moscow.

Chivalry is looked upon as a bourgeois hypocrisy by the new society of Russia, and has quite died out among the younger generation. The true Bolshevik will tell you frankly that to pay little attentions and courtesies to woman is to treat her as an inferior. No longer is it a custom as it was in old Russia, for a man to kiss the hand of a woman on meeting her. Even the lifting of the hat on such occasions is discouraged, while there is a strong movement against so simple a form of greeting as handshaking, a movement, it is true, partially inspired by enthusiasm for

hygiene. No Communist man, if force of habit did not compel him to act otherwise, would ever dream of opening a door for a woman. The assumption is that men and women are comrades in the full sense of the term and equal in every possible respect. Often this point of view is emphasised with needless brusqueness, but a revolution (as the Bolsheviks always insist) is a revolution and not a time for courtesy or tenderness.

However things may work out in the future, it is certain at present that many women are suffering severe hardships and have become terribly embittered against men. And it is equally certain that many men too are disillusioned with women.

If prostitution is less visible in Russia than in any other European country, I am afraid it cannot be said that vice is less prevalent. A more reliable index is the widespread existence of syphilis, which has reached the proportions of a terrible plague; it is bad enough in the towns, but in the country there is not a village which has not been infected. There is not the least exaggeration in this statement, which is founded upon information given to me personally by Dr. Siemashko and upon official announcements made from time to time in the Bolshevik newspapers. It describes what is perhaps the most terrible of all the tragic consequences of the Revolution. In the long, sinister history of disease there has, I imagine, been nothing to equal it.

Syphilis, as we know, is very widespread, far more widespread than the average person supposes. But here we have a whole nation composed of 130 million souls stricken with it. One shrinks from imagining how awful must be the effects upon the race in the future; and upon the races with which it may be in contact.

In view of all the conditions described, it may well be imagined that family life in Soviet Russia has undergone a rather severe ordeal. It may be doubted whether an institution that is as old as human existence itself can be destroyed. But one thing is certain, the attempt to do so has involved many individuals in tragic consequences. Yet one must not fall into the error of generalisation. Numerous members of the old bourgeois class in Russia struggle hard

to keep up old ways and traditions. And if one penetrates into their homes one will see much the same family life going on as in England. Scrupulous cleanliness is preserved; and children are well cared for. Domestic economy has become a fine art. The housewife does most if not all of the work herself, food is of the simplest kind and no one ever dreams of going out to a place of amusement. I met people who had not been to a theatre or place of entertainment for five or six years. There is very little social life. Nevertheless the Russian custom of assembling in the evening and sitting far into the early hours of the morning, taking tea and talking or enjoying music, still survives.

In a country where living space is severely rationed and where every room contains several people, sometimes as many as five or six, it is difficult to maintain even conditions of ordinary decency. Is it surprising, therefore, that the struggle to keep up family life should have become a desperate struggle to maintain some semblance of respectability. No one can think of anything but the material needs of everyday existence. The atmosphere is perpetually charged with nervous irritability, and affection is put to the severest strain. Always something untoward is happening, an article of essential clothing wears out, or food supplies run short, or illness occurs.

Individuals strive to be generous one to another, but in spite of themselves are guilty of acts of selfishness, which seem particularly sordid at such times. And so it happens that while the external fabric of family life survives, propped up by training and tradition, its true spirit and essential binding force—disinterested love—is no longer there to anything like the same extent as in former days. Bewilderment and despair have taken its place. Most people feel utterly helpless in the face of a calamity so great, and so they drift from day to day thinking only of the immediate moment, caring nothing for the future.

Here let me interpose a little personal experience which perhaps will best illustrate the outlook of the people whom I have in mind. During my stay in Russia I visited an old acquaintance, who in former times had striven hard to keep up a beautiful home and give his three children the best

possible education. I found that he lived, together with his family, in one miserable room the furniture of which was poor and scanty. It chanced that he was in a facetious mood. Perhaps meeting with a foreigner (a rare and hazardous experience in Soviet Russia) had awakened his sense of irony.

"Yes, life has changed, as you see!" he said with a sigh. "Now I am a happy man . . . no duties, no responsibilities. In the old days my wife was always nagging. 'What about the children's education? And their clothes? And my clothes? I want this and I want that.' And then there was the endless expense of entertaining people whom at heart one disliked. . . . And all the weariness and cost of keeping up appearances. But now things are quite different. My wife grumbles as usual, more so, much more so, in fact. But I shrug my shoulders and say: 'What can I do?' The children come home singing songs about Lenin and talking communist chatter. 'Are you really indifferent to their future?' she asks. And again I answer, 'What can I do?' And so it goes on. A pig's life—yes. But even a pig's life is not without its compensations. We can't afford tablecloths—and so we simply cover the table with newspapers and are content—we have to be so. Now for the first time I know that there is a lot to be said for life in the slums. . . . Soon I shall be a convinced Communist."

Naturally, the Bolsheviks do not trouble too much about the old bourgeoisie, for they say quite frankly that the extermination of this class was their main purpose. What does cause them grave concern is the quick growth of the new bourgeoisie. But that is a development so important in itself as to call for special treatment elsewhere. Meanwhile, let us see what effect the Revolution has had upon the family life of the peasants and of the workers.

We must not forget that the Revolution was made in the interests of this class, and of none other. I did not find that the family life of the peasants had changed for the better. It was never too happy. And to-day, when poverty has become intensified, it is if anything less so than ever.

The mass of the peasants are too preoccupied with



the task of getting a livelihood to think of politics. But in some villages easy of access to communications, and where Communist agitation has taken a hold, politics have divided families and introduced new elements of friction. Women sometimes take a prominent part in the discussions and become members of the local Soviets. But they are subjected to much ridicule from the men. The *moujik* is accustomed to beat his wife, and can never imagine that she is fit to be anything else but his slave. Many peasant women whose self-respect has been awakened by the Revolution will no longer put up with such treatment. And as a means of escaping from the indignities of their home life, they seek political expression. But the men regard them as intruders and persecute them. This attitude has led to many violent episodes, and not always have the women had the worst of the struggle.

It is said that only the most evil and degenerate types of womanhood in the village are brazen enough to force their presence into politics. There may perhaps be some truth in this assertion. For we know that in time of revolution there is much rough work to be done, and that only rough people are able to do it. But in so far as they break down barriers that others better than themselves may pass, they perhaps perform a useful task in the scheme of things.

The class whose family life has been mostly affected by the Revolution is the town proletariat. The Bolsheviks have made a very determined attempt to induce this class to be sociable. Communal dining-rooms have been everywhere established, many within the factories themselves. In these dining-rooms plain and sometimes good food can be obtained for a modest sum.

The appearance of these popular restaurants is strictly utilitarian, not over-pleasing to the eye, and they are conducted on a rough-and-ready principle. When the worker's taste is a little more cultivated he will certainly not be satisfied with them.

Meanwhile, the communal dining-rooms help to fulfil one of the much-professed aims of the Bolsheviks, which is to get rid of the need for cooking in the home. And they also serve as useful propaganda centres. The walls are plastered

with revolutionary slogans and sometimes reading-rooms form part of the establishments. Complaint is made that the workers are tardy in developing a social conscience; knives, forks and other things are constantly being stolen from communal tables.

Clubs, too, have been everywhere opened for the proletarians, and here whole families, including the youngest children, can repair during the evening. But this is only one side of the picture. Not all workers are in a position to enjoy social life. Even among Trade Unionists, the most privileged section of the community, unemployment is high. The social insurance scheme has broken down financially, and most of the unemployed are either forced to beg in the streets or to drift back to the country. To these unfortunate people the clubs and the communal dining-rooms seem as remote as do the clubs of Piccadilly and the restaurants of the West End of London to the majority of English people. It is of little consolation to them that their rulers advertise themselves as proletarian; they are just as much down and out in Soviet Russia as they would be down and out were they in any land governed by the hated bourgeoisie. Wandering from town to town, and from village to village, beseeching all whom they meet to give them help, family life has little meaning for them. Perhaps it was this human wreckage that the British Trades Union Delegates had in mind when they said that "the new system is undoubtedly tending to destroy what is known in this country as family life. . . . The units will scatter and often forget whence they came."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE STATE OF RELIGION

THE state of religious belief in Soviet Russia is curious and confused. Upon this, as upon most other subjects connected with Russia, there has been much misrepresentation. The truth can only be established by a careful analysis of Bolshevik religious (or anti-religious) policy.

As with all affairs which they undertook, the Bolsheviks in their anti-religious conduct slavishly followed the example of the Paris Commune. The Paris Commune imprisoned priests, prohibited religious education, converted churches into meeting halls, confiscated sacred objects, and made ridicule of religion. The Bolsheviks did all these things. But one useful reform must be set to their credit, the separation of the Church from the State. Who, except the most reactionary, will say that this was not desirable from every point of view, and most of all in the interests of religion itself? The submission of the Church to the State had corrupted both; and the humiliations suffered by the one were shared by the other until the final drama was reached in which Nicholas the Last was martyred and the charlatan, Rasputin, murdered.

Next in importance to the separation of Church from State was the confiscation of the property of the Church. The Church owned nearly two million dessiatines of land, besides numerous hotels, houses, and shops. Peter the Great had confiscated much Church property; and in England Henry VIII had done the same. It may be urged that the Church had need of fixed sources of revenue no less than other institutions, and that the confiscated land divided up amongst so many peasants has not added appreciably to their wealth. But whatever is to be said for this view, it must be admitted that there was historic precedent for

confiscation. That such precedent existed was not in itself excuse for the Bolsheviks, but when they are accused, as so often they are, of being the most mendacious Government in all history, are they not entitled to point to acts corresponding to their own committed by other rulers in other times?

More vulnerable to criticism is the fundamental attitude of the Bolsheviks towards religion. The Soviet Constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief; in that respect it is theoretically an advance upon the old *régime*. But in life itself things work out otherwise. For Bolshevik laws and prejudices impose very severe obstacles to the practice of religious belief. In the first place, religious teaching is forbidden in the schools or in other public institutions; it can only be given in private. Since education without ethics is inconceivable, something had to replace religion. The Bolshevik substitute was atheism. Christianity separated from the State, atheism became established as the State belief. Atheism, in a word, is the State religion of Soviet Russia, and it is organised on much the same lines as any other State religion. It is directed and controlled by the Soviet leaders, all of whom are fanatical materialists; it has its academies (or seminaries) where professors are trained to propagate its gospels; it has a literature subsidised by the State which includes a number of popular publications, containing talented caricatures of sacred subjects, the blasphemy of which is unimaginably indecent and far surpasses the limits of any similar propaganda of former revolutionary epochs: and, finally, this propaganda is preached, not only in the Press, but also on all public platforms and is taught as part of the educational system in all schools, from the lowest grade to the highest.

The Bolshevik arguments against Christianity are the usual arguments of atheism against religion. To quote them in detail would therefore be quite superfluous. But one or two points may profitably be dealt with.

When they are not accusing Christianity of cunning, the Bolsheviks say of it that it is naïve. But is not precisely the same to be said of the atheism which they are so zealously propagating? Take, for example, Bukharin's exposition



of the subject. Bukharin is one of the pontiffs of Bolshevik orthodoxy, and an authentic interpreter of both its Books—the Book of Lenin and the Book of Marx. By reason of his narrow outlook, he is peculiarly qualified to be a theologian of the new religion, the seat of which is in the Vatican of Modern Russia—the Moscow Kremlin.

Bukharin declares that man and human society are part of nature, part of the animal world. And then he goes on to say that theology explains nothing. Events follow causes; these causes are often incalculable because of ignorance. But they are there none the less. And it is our purpose to discover them. In a word, though much remains unexplained everything is capable of explanation. But neither vulgar atheism nor vulgar religion can advance human knowledge; the blasphemies and obscenities of the one are no better than the superstitions and insincerities of the other. Thus the war of the Bolsheviks against religious faith is crude and senseless, for they do not understand that religious faith itself cannot be evil, but that it is those who exploit it for bad ends and so drag it into the mire who are evil. Nor do they realise that religion is not confined to those who profess one of its recognised creeds. A good atheist has more Christianity in him than a false, hypocritical Christian. Many of the Bolsheviks are bad atheists, just as many Christians are bad Christians—and therefore both are bad men.

During Christmas of 1924 the Bolsheviks waged a propaganda campaign for the celebration of Christmas without God. Zinoviev issued an anti-religious appeal which began with these words: "We will grapple with the Lord God in due season. We shall vanquish Him in His highest Heaven and wherever He seeks refuge and we shall subdue Him for ever."

The Bolshevik organ *Isvestia* boasted that the Pioneer movement composed of one million members was 100 per cent. atheist, and added that the elementary school children, numbering five millions, were gradually being converted to atheism. The Pioneer movement, it should be mentioned, embraces all Communist children; for young people who

have joined the Communist Party there is another organisation known as the Comsomols. For both these movements atheism is a qualification of membership.

The article which appeared in the *Izvestia* was headed "St. Pioneer," to whom was attributed the miracle of having split the family into two—"the old obsolete parent and the young vigorous atheist of the future." At the beginning of this article the following lines from the verses of a Pioneer song were quoted :

"Down with all the monks, the rabbis, and the popes,  
We'll climb into Heaven and sweep away the gods."

Then followed a number of contributions from the children themselves. The members of a Pioneer Club in Moscow wrote: "We, the young godless ones, are waging active war against our religious parents." And the pupils of an elementary school sent this note: "We understand what it means to be Pioneers. They are the chaps who believe in neither God nor devil, and do not wear crosses. . . . We would like to join them."

The State monopolises all channels of publicity, and makes use of this monopoly to discredit and ridicule all religions. At the same time it does not permit its own attitude to be the subject of unfavourable comment. A priest may preach in his church or visit members of his congregation, but he must not say a word against atheism, the State religion, or against the Soviet Government. He must not revile nor rebuke the Bolshevik leaders. To do either is to be guilty of blasphemy, and to render himself liable to arrest as a counter-revolutionary. Thus religion is judged by the standards of politics.

The number of ecclesiastical persons executed from 1917 to 1920 was 8050, including 1275 bishops. At the present time the death sentence is not carried out so frequently as formerly, but arrests continue in large numbers. The penalty imposed is imprisonment or exile to remote parts. Several well-known bishops have been banished to the distant villages of Northern Russia, where they earn a precarious livelihood as stablemen or shepherds.

In these circumstances the freedom of religious worship

guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution has little meaning. An incautious word let slip during a sermon or during a visit to a parishioner may have serious consequences.

The full power of the State is used to impose atheism upon the people, particularly upon the younger generation, and religion is terrorised and ridiculed. Yet of late the Bolshevik leaders have begun to realise that the assault upon religion has been carried out in too crude a manner. It is not strange that they should have come to this conclusion. But what is surprising is that they should have reached it so late in the day. All their lives they had been preaching that reason would demolish religion, if only it were allowed a hearing. And yet when it was within their power to give it a hearing, they preferred to make use of the old weapons of abuse, repression and persecution. Now more intelligent methods are to be pursued. Science is to be elevated to a religion and set against religion.

As typical representatives of that earth-ridden intelligentsia which they affect to despise the Bolsheviks have become fanatical worshippers at the shrine of science. Thus mysticism survives, and even traces of superstition are discernible. For the limitations of science are not admitted nor understood; again illusion has superseded reason. But assuming that limitations do not exist and that the mysteries of life and death are destined to be discovered by a professor in a Moscow laboratory, is it not more likely that this professor will be nearer to a perfect man, a god on earth, than a Chekist, or a Moscow bureaucrat? And so the circle is complete, and we come back to the need for self-perfection, for true religion, in a word.

It is possible that some of the Bolshevik leaders believed that there were revolutionary possibilities in Christianity—not the Christianity of the Orthodox Faith, nor yet Christianity as preached by Tolstoy, but Christianity, aggressive and warlike—fighting Christianity, to use a term much employed in these days. But other Bolshevik leaders had quite different ideas. Stepanov, one of the most enthusiastic opponents of religion, said, for example: "We will use Church dissension for a complete and decisive separation of the masses from every cult, religion and church."

It cannot be denied that the Revolution found the Church in an enfeebled condition. Not less than the political institutions with which it had gravely compromised itself, it stood in need of reform. But so complete was its helplessness that it could not carry out any reform on its own initiative. The severe trials to which it had been subjected had deprived it of all moral stamina. Many priests succumbed to hunger and fear, and fell away from the Faith. But many, too, faced death in the spirit of the martyrs. What the Church could not do for itself persecution did for it. Its reform has only just begun. But it has begun; that is a fact of which there can be no possible doubt.

It is impossible within the limits of a chapter to relate the long history of intrigue and persecution directed against the Church since the Bolsheviks assumed power. But allusion may be made to one or two phases. To demonstrate the purpose of the Bolshevik policy we must describe its effect. This effect has been to render ecclesiastical administration physically impossible. With the deliberate object of depriving the flock of its shepherds, high dignitaries of the Church as well as simple priests were put to gaol in great numbers. Nowhere was the terror more acutely felt, and nowhere, too, were more spies to be found than in the precincts of churches and monasteries; the G.P.U. had succeeded in placing informers among the priests and in the cells of the monks.

While in Russia I visited numerous monasteries in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Nijni Novgorod, Novgorod, and Yaroslavl. The contrast between the life led there now and that of the past was very striking.

Many of the monks ceased to be monks in the early days of the Revolution. "Some of the brothers left us and went out to find bread for themselves in the time of Militant Communism. Later they came back, but we shut the gates against them." It was an old monk with the austere face of an apostle who spoke these words to me. Wholly indifferent to what was happening in the world outside, he was poring over a sacred book in an empty church situated on the banks of the Volga at Nijni Novgorod. He left his book for a moment to show me one of the oldest ikons in



Russia—a picture of the Virgin painted according to the inscription in 993 A.D.—five years after the introduction of Christianity into the country. Everything about him was in disorder; holy pictures were stacked against the walls and religious articles were strewn on the floor, which was thick with dirt. A few days later I peered through the broken windows of a beautiful church at Yaroslavl. Pigeons flew in, and beat their wings about the altar. The walls were covered with exquisite frescoes, the colours of which were as fresh as though they had been painted yesterday. But how desolate the whole scene looked!

At Kiev, an acquaintance accompanied me to the famous *lavra*.\* My arrival there caused a sensation. Some of the monks desired to talk with me; my arm was seized first by one and then another, but my companion would not permit of any conversation. "There are spies among them. Come away! It's dangerous!" he said in a trembling voice. I was surprised to see that he had turned quite pale.

In spite of his alarm I insisted upon visiting the catacombs, where, in niches placed in dark, gloomy passages, the bodies of seventy-three saints, wrapped in rich silks, lie in open coffins. A monk, candle in hand, led the way, and related with pride that the Bolsheviks had broken into the coffins, but that they had found real bodies there, all in a wonderful state of preservation. I mentioned that the Bolsheviks had told me that in most instances where coffins alleged to contain the remains of saints had been opened only rubbish had been found inside, including cardboard arms and legs. But in reply the monk insisted that real bodies had been found in the coffins of the catacombs at Kiev. When I emerged into the daylight again, an impressive spectacle met my eye. The garden of the *lavra* was filled with pilgrims—peasants who had tramped hundreds of miles to visit the monastery—and in their midst was a holy man, a simple peasant with eyes of fire, reciting religious exhortations.

Afterwards I wandered alone through the monastery buildings. On my way I encountered a youth who told me that he was about to become a priest. He had a graceful

\* A *lavra* is a large monastery.

figure, and his face was handsome, though very worn. He recalled to my mind some of the portraits of St. Sebastian. At once he invited me to his room, a plain apartment the walls of which were covered with ikons and photographs of bishops. He spoke with the fervour of a fanatic, and his eyes sparkled all the while with inspiration. Russia, he said, was more religious than before the Revolution. . . . Hundreds of bishops were in prison and in exile. It was terrible. But God had saved Russia; the Church was now greater than ever; suffering had made it so.

We had only been conversing for a moment or two when there was a loud knock at the door; and the head of a monk appeared. I understood him to say that it was dangerous to be talking with a foreigner. And so I left immediately, although the youth begged me to stay, saying that he had no fears.

As I drove back to the hotel with my companion he pointed to the park on the hill where "all the shooting took place."

"I don't know what will happen to me," he went on. "I've done a very risky thing in going to the monastery with you." He was trembling from head to foot. I never saw him again.

On another day I visited the cemetery by the side of the Dnieper. Many of the crosses and sacred images on the tombstones had been damaged; the river had recently overflowed its banks, washing out numerous graves and overturning monuments. One might have imagined that an earthquake had taken place.

Afterwards I met a young woman belonging to the educated classes, and she remarked that strange things were happening in Kiev; that the flooding of the cemetery was "a sign from God," and that the hill on which the *lavra* was situated was being undermined by the river. She also told me the story of the golden dome, a story of the church in Kiev, the dome of which was gilded overnight by an unseen hand. For days afterwards crowds of pilgrims flocked to see it glittering in the sunlight.

Since the property of the monasteries has been confiscated, many of the monks are forced to seek a livelihood

in the outside world. Some of them work as labourers loading goods at the railway stations; others find employment as grave-diggers in the cemeteries. One monk called my attention to a neglected orchard. "When we worked there it gave an abundance of fruit and paid its way," he remarked, "but since it has been nationalised it has gone to ruin." In what he said there was truth. For the Bolsheviks abolished the only financially successful communes that ever existed in Russia when they drove the monks from their gardens.

As the estates of the monasteries have been nationalised, the monks are now required to pay rent to the Government for their cells or rooms. Many habitable apartments have been handed over to communists and workers. It was strange to see these monasteries, once so reposeful, invaded by crowds of people who had little reverence for their surroundings, strange to hear unrestrained human voices, and the laughter and cries of rollicking children, where once all had been so silent and solemn. Young men were playing football in the grounds, while young women in low-necked dresses and short skirts freely came and went. Similar scenes were to be witnessed in the convents. The solitude of the nuns had gone for ever. I saw many of them working alongside young men, making shirts for sale to anyone who would purchase them.

Numerous churches have been converted into clubs, where café chantant entertainments are sometimes given. The crucifix has been taken down and the red flag substituted for it. Frequently advertisements may be seen, announcing that performances will take place in these clubs that once were churches, consisting of "Athenian museums of living sculpture, and classical bare-footed dances; price of admission 1 rouble 50 kopecks (three shillings)." A well-known Bolshevik poet read one of these announcements and said: "Fancy paying 1 rouble 50 to see bare feet, when lots of peasant women with bare feet can be seen for nothing."

## CHAPTER XXIX

### A LAST INTERVIEW WITH THE PATRIARCH TIKHON

THE moral fatigue of the Orthodox Church led to internal strife, as a consequence of which the separatist movement, known as "The Living Church," was organised. The Soviet Government gave much encouragement to this movement. But its motive in so doing was not to bring about a reformation of religion, but to divide the Church and undermine its influence over the masses.

In 1919, the head of the Church, His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, anathematised the Soviet Government. Two years later, in the month of May, he was put under arrest. The leaders of the revolt against his authority at once arrogated administrative authority to themselves and, acting in close co-operation with the G.P.U., summoned a council of bishops and priests, from which all who had been censured by the State or sentenced for offences in the Civil Courts were excluded.

The proceedings of this council, which took place in May 1923, were of interest because they disclosed the policy of those who were seeking to reform the Church. Only one reform was agreed upon. Formerly, the marriage of "black" clergy, or monks, from whom bishops and higher dignitaries were chosen, was prohibited, while "white" clergy, or priests, were only permitted to marry once. The council removed these restrictions. But none of the doctrines of the Church were revised; they remained the same as they had been for a century or more.

Judging from their remarks on this and on other occasions, the leaders of the movement believed that sympathy with Bolshevism was not incompatible with Orthodox faith and ritual. One of them, Antonine, said, for example, that he remained true to monastic tradition, and was ready to lead



the fight against any Protestant tendencies. He was opposed to radical changes, and did not believe that the religion of the future would be different from that of the past. Another leader, Vedensky, said that inasmuch as Marxism was materialistic and atheistic, it was wrong in its philosophy of life, but it remained true that the Soviet Government, dominated by the thinking of Karl Marx, was the only Government that was striving to enthrone the principles of Christ. He added that Lenin was dear to the Church.

And a third leader, Krasnitsky, declared that whereas the Tsar's Church was the tool of the autocracy, the Living Church favoured the Revolution. "We believe," he continued, "that by working from within we can destroy the bourgeois influence of the Church. We support the Red Army because it is necessary for the World Revolution. . . . The Communists are wrong in believing that they can destroy religion. Otherwise their programme is immaculate and unquestionable. The Red Army is a Christian Army. Christ would bless the Bolsheviks if He were on earth."

The council passed a resolution in these terms: "The whole world has become divided into two classes, capitalistic exploiters and the proletariat, on whose toil and blood the capitalistic world builds its prosperity. Christians cannot remain indifferent. The council proclaims capitalism to be a deadly sin, and the fight against the same to be sacred to a Christian. In the Soviet power, the council sees the leader of the world towards fraternity, equality, and peace."

The resolution then proceeded to accuse the Patriarch Tikhon of having served the cause of counter-revolution instead of that of Christ, and alluded to him as "a denier of the true testament of Christ and a betrayer of the Church."

Having sentenced him to dismissal from the Church, the council recorded its conviction that "the Soviet power is the only one throughout the world that will realise by methods of statehood the ideal of the Kingdom of God upon earth." And finally the Council closed by sending the blessings of the holy fathers to Lenin.

Meanwhile it was feared that the Patriarch would be executed, and protests were sent to the Bolshevik Government from all parts of the Christian world. On June 22, 1922, His Holiness was released. It was at this period that the Orthodox Church went through its severest trial, for the Bolsheviks officially proclaimed that the Patriarch had signed the following declaration:

"Having been brought up in a monarchical society and until my arrest having been under the influence of anti-Soviet persons, I was very hostile to the Soviet Government. Recognising the correctness of the Supreme Court's accusations and its sentence, which is in conformity with the clauses of the Criminal Code, I repent of all my actions against the Government and request the Supreme Court to change the sentence and set me free. Herewith, I declare that I am no more an enemy of the Soviet Government. I have finally and resolutely severed all connections with the foreign and international monarchists and White Guard counter-revolutionaries."

The simple people were persuaded that the Patriarch had signed the withdrawal under threats, and wherever he went to conduct services they covered his path with flowers. But the more educated members of the Orthodox congregation were dumbfounded. The Patriarch was an aged man, and he did not long survive. I was probably the last foreigner to see him. When I was in Moscow in 1924 I visited the Donskoi Monastery, which was built to commemorate the victory gained over the Tartars in 1591. Close to the entrance is a little two-storeyed red house, where the Patriarch took up his residence in the stormy days of Church dissension. The housekeeper, a typical plain-speaking Russian servant belonging to the past, told me that the Patriarch was enjoying a little rest, and that I should have to wait a while before I could see him.

In order to pass time I went and conversed with one of the grey-cassocked monks in his little room or cell. He was very hospitable and insisted on making tea for me.

Afterwards I wandered through the cemetery. I noticed that there were wreaths on the graves decorated with bright red ribbons. A widow in deep black, who was seated





THE LATE PATRIARCH TIKHON.



by the grave of her husband, drinking tea and eating sandwiches, informed me that "well-known Communists are buried here." What a mixed assembly will arise from this spot on the Judgment Day—monks and Bolsheviks!

When I returned to the little house, at the entrance gate the housekeeper bade me sit in the hall just outside the kitchen. I could see pots and pans on a stove—the Patriarch's lunch was being got ready. And near to the stove was a little alcove filled with religious ikons before which lights were burning.

After the lapse of a few minutes I was conducted upstairs to the Patriarch's room. It was a small apartment, furnished with conspicuous simplicity. I was surprised to find that the Patriarch was not there. Instead I was received by a bishop, whose capable and shrewd face at once made an impression upon me. He said that the Patriarch was unwell, but that in his absence he could speak for him.

We began to talk. But almost immediately the door of an adjacent room opened and a small, old, and tired-looking man, robed in purple, entered. At once I recognised the Patriarch. After we had exchanged greetings, he sat down on one side of the table, and begged me be seated on the other.

Naturally, I asked him about the state of religion in Russia.

"You know that perhaps better than I do. What do you think?" he answered.

And then he told me that the teaching of atheism was influencing the minds of the young, but that older people remained faithful. The Church, he added, was poor in a material sense, but richer than ever in spirit.

I did not care to speak to him of his relations with the Government. But he mentioned the subject himself. He said he was anxious for peace with the Bolsheviks. He had been visited by Krasnitsky, one of the rebel priests, who had asked his forgiveness. "If a man repents he must be taken back to the Church. No one must have the idea that there is no such thing as forgiveness," he remarked. He also said that if Krasnitsky made his peace with the Orthodox faith his influence with the Government could be of use ;

in that event perhaps all those churches which had been confiscated and put to other than religious purposes, would be returned and the priests then in prison released.

The venerable Patriarch spoke in a very frank and simple manner. It was evident that he had determined to render unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's. During the conversation the bishop stood in the background, his strong and astute face contrasting strikingly with the calm, weary face of the Patriarch.

As I took my leave the housekeeper asked in an excited tone: "Was he content?"

I replied that I thought he was.

"And are you?"

I answered that I was.

"Thanks be to God!" she exclaimed.

Afterwards some of the monks drew me aside and began to criticise the Patriarch. They said that he was no match for the wily Krasnitsky.

The Patriarch did not make his peace with the leaders of the Living Church. Instead, he issued a statement in the course of which he quoted a Russian writer who as far back as 1906 said:

"To-day's Church movement is liberal Christianity, and liberal Christianity is only a half-truth. The soul which is divided into two parts, religious and secular, cannot be wholly the servant of God, nor of the world. The result is only a half-true warm-cold liberal Christianity in which there is none of God's truth, nor of men's truth either. Representatives of such Christianity are without religious enthusiasms. Among them there are no martyrs and no prophets. The society of Church reformers is not the first light of the coming bride of the Apocalypse, clothed in the sun, but is one of those many professional societies which are pretending to be what they are not."

Yet at the same time the Patriarch reiterated his denial of opposition to the Soviet State. Last year he passed from the scene altogether.

The Living Church made no appeal to the masses. When I was in Russia I found that the majority of people were almost unaware of its existence. Those from whom

I sought information on the subject could not tell me whether any particular church belonged to the Living Church or to the Orthodox Church. But what surprised me most was their complete indifference on the subject.

The attempts to divide the Church still continue. The Metropolitan Peter, the provisional successor (whom the Patriarch nominated), has been imprisoned and the administrative apparatus has been taken over by a number of prelates who claim to be the followers and interpreters of the Patriarch Tikhon. What the ultimate outcome of this schism will be it is hard to say. It may be that the purification of the Orthodox Church is not complete, and that more tribulation is in store for it. But of this there is no doubt, that it has gained, and not lost, from the persecution and suffering which it has so far undergone—a fact attested by many signs of the times, not the least of which is the rush of educated men to join the priesthood. Thus the intelligentsia seeks to atone for its atheism in the past.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE PLIGHT OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

WHAT is the economic position of the bourgeoisie in the towns of Soviet Russia? One might almost expect to find that as a class it no longer existed. The aim of the French Revolution was to destroy the ruling class. That of the Bolsheviks was considerably larger, for it sought not merely to destroy the aristocracy or ruling class, but to conquer and in part destroy the middle classes or the bourgeoisie. And some of the more extreme members of the Party imagined that it would be possible to kill off the bourgeoisie altogether, to exterminate it physically. But although the bourgeoisie was ruthlessly assailed, and its ranks were depleted during the frenzied days of the Revolution, it still survives. And what is more it is fast growing in numbers.

When Militant Communism was abandoned and private enterprise restored, a new bourgeoisie at once appeared; and this new bourgeoisie is increasing rapidly, both in the town and in the country.

In the town particularly it was the most disreputable elements who embarked upon trade; for cunning of a quite special kind was needed to evade the restrictive laws imposed by the Bolshevik Dictatorship. And even the practice of so useful a talent as this afforded little safeguard against the persecution of the State, which for no other reason than that it desired to stifle competition, and above all to show its fist, periodically rounded up and exiled batches of traders to remote parts. In these circumstances, the more reliable trader, belonging to the old merchant class, declined to re-enter business, and the field was left free to the adventurer.

Mirabeau said: "I know but three modes of living in



human society. Every man must be either a beggar, a thief, or a paid state functionary." How true this saying is of human society in Soviet Russia!

When I was in Moscow, Zinoviev made this remark: "We threw it (the bourgeoisie) from the fifth floor. But it got on its feet again and is alive." This discovery has caused the Bolsheviks much bewilderment. The bourgeoisie were conquered, as Marx and Lenin had said they must be conquered. But neither of these leaders had the least idea (so Zinoviev said) how the defeated class would look some years after the Revolution. Would they still look crushed or would they lift their heads again? And in either event what was to be done with them?

The type known as "Nepman" has come into existence, the word NEP. being constituted from the first letters of the words "New Economic Policy." And, with the Nepman, came the Nepman's wife; a gross, overfed couple, who gave the Bolshevik papers rich material for caricatures.

The "Nepmen," it should be explained, are the backbone of the new bourgeoisie; and consist largely of the former petty bourgeois class, which was always numerous in Russia, and which supported the Revolution, so long as it repressed the rich, and deserted it when it repressed themselves. But the new bourgeoisie also includes three other categories: (1) far-seeing and disillusioned men who abandoned their Communist faith so soon as it abandoned them, that is to say, when private trading was restored, (2) new officials, many of whom were second and third grade intelligentsia whom the Revolution precipitated into the ruling class, and (3) ex-workmen who have been promoted to Government posts. So even Russia, where almost everyone is poor, has its newly-rich, thus proving that the law of relativity knows not the limitations of systems, and takes no account of the mystical conception of universal equality.

The Bolsheviks soon found that life would not function without the aid of the brain-worker as well as that of the hand-worker. To overcome the prejudices of the educated class against a proletarian State was not easy. When so many of this educated class had been massacred, the chances of reconciliation with the survivors were certainly none too

hopeful. Reconciliation has not yet taken place, nor will it ever take place under present conditions.

The State, it is true, has the whip-hand. It is the chief employer of labour, and can lock out rebellious elements. But reprisals of this nature cannot be extensively resorted to; for if the brain-worker needs the bread of the State, the State also needs the service of the brain-worker. And so what happens is this: The brain-worker over whom stands a Communist official (or whip-holder), often a semi-literate man, has no heart in his work, and does as little as he possibly can to earn a subsistence. Thus Communism, summed up, is the oppression of the strong by the weak. During my stay in Leningrad there was a conference of engineers at which a delegate, who must have possessed exceptional courage, got on his feet and said these words: "We feel antipathy to our work. And why? Because there is no prospect before us. The Communists are materialists. They say that labour is the only power in the world. And we say that is wrong. The free thought of the free man is the only power in the world."

The Bolsheviks have tried to come to terms with the brain-workers. They started several big projects mainly (so they say) for the purpose of finding an outlet for the activities of eminent engineers. And they are constantly extolling the value of science, and emphasising the need for employing all intellectual forces available in the country. Yet all the while they abuse and ridicule the bourgeoisie, deny them political expression, censor all their work, teach their children atheism and Marxian economics and make it difficult for these children to get into a university. No wonder the average brain-worker believes that they are cynically making use of him; and that so soon as they can do without his services they will put him on the street. And this is what is actually happening. Whenever a proletarian is 'deemed to be sufficiently educated to take the place of a "bourjoui," the latter is at once discharged.

It is true, as the Bolsheviks say, that the State has need of all the available intellectual forces. But the State is poverty-stricken and cannot afford to employ too many superior brain-workers. Its resources are largely expended

upon propaganda, upon maintaining the secret police, and upon keeping up a bureaucracy composed of thousands of secretaries, typists and clerks. Doctors are sadly needed—but many are unemployed. When I was in Kiev doctors were sweeping the streets. And I also came across many engineers who were without work.

The staffs in government departments are being constantly reduced; officials' salaries are not always paid regularly, particularly in the provinces, and when they are paid are subjected to arbitrary levies for various funds, including one to assist foreign comrades in the cause of the world proletarian revolution.

A specialist in a government department may earn as much as £10 a week. That is not a very large amount when the high cost of living is taken into account. But it is much more than the average worker receives, and double the salary paid to a Commissar of high rank—to Kamenev or Trotsky, for example. Of course, the latter have other compensations. They are provided with good living accommodation, servants, and a motor car, and should they feel disposed to visit a theatre, a box is placed at their disposal. They may not be able to accumulate money, but they can hardly be described as poor in the true sense of the word. On the other hand, most of the intelligentsia are worse than poor, are poverty-stricken, in fact. Naturally everyone wished to become a specialist in a government department, but there was a limit to the number of posts. Favouritism and corruption determined appointments; and many people were employed who had no expert qualifications whatsoever.

The plight of those intellectuals who cannot find employment in the government service is desperate. A professor on an average does not get more than £2 or £3 a week. Perhaps if he works very hard, giving lectures from morning until night, or undertaking translations, he may manage to increase the amount to £5. A teacher in a secondary or middle school is fortunate if he receives 15s. weekly. I met a doctor who saw one hundred patients daily and his weekly remuneration worked out at about 18s. Glazonov, the famous composer and director of the Lenin-

grad Conservatoire, receives £2 weekly. And that is a princely sum in Soviet Russia. The great majority of intellectual workers earn on an average no more than 15s. weekly. And they are lucky if they can find employment of any kind, even for that miserable wage.

Rent is the only item in their budget that is cheap. Food is certainly as dear as it is in England, while the cost of clothing and boots is four or five times greater. The plight of the people in employment is bad enough. But that of the thousands who have not even a pittance of a wage to depend upon, who have no work of any kind, is indescribably tragic.

The opportunities for employment are very limited. If a vacancy cannot be found in a state department or undertaking, there is nothing to be done except to open a shop, or find work as an assistant in one that is already in existence. But in that event the chances of security are remote. Harassed by the police and the tax-collector, no private enterprise lasts very long, and whenever there is a vacancy for an employé there are thousands of applicants.

And so the life of the educated classes in Soviet Russia is a hand-to-mouth life, a life of dreariness and drift. Some of them had too great a contempt for the workers in the past, and still retain old prejudices. For these one cannot have much sympathy.

Economically the Revolution has touched everyone. If we judge by Western standards, we find that there are no rich men in Russia; poverty is general. But even so, some people have more than others. This inequality became more manifest after Communism was abandoned, and the New Economic Policy was introduced. And it is still developing. While all Russians agree that the days of Communism, or Militant Communism as it is appropriately called, were the worst, I met many—and some belonging to the educated classes too—who said that they preferred then to now. "We had little to eat," they remarked, "and everything was tragic and horrible, but at least we had no responsibilities. We were all the servants of the State, and it was the State's job to keep us alive."

"But the State couldn't——" I began.



"What did it matter? We got along somehow, and those who didn't—well, they died. But now we've got to look after ourselves—to find work when there is no work."

And strangely enough I came across one or two people who had altogether escaped the hardships of the Revolution. One woman told me that she had never been without water, electric light or sanitation during the whole Revolution, a circumstance due to the proximity of her dwelling to an important military establishment, for the benefit of which those public services were maintained. I also met a man who said that he was a chemist, and that throughout the Revolution he had "sat quiet and undisturbed in a factory," but such instances were rare exceptions.

Most people were glad to be done with Communism, but few—I speak here of the educated class—find much joy in their present condition. When I returned from Russia some of my friends, who are none too well off, remarked to me: "I would sooner be there than here because there everyone is poor and that makes poverty all the easier to bear." It is true that everyone is poor in Russia, the man who receives £10 as well as the man who receives 15s. weekly. But the latter are not the more contented on that account; there are varying levels in poverty as well as in affluence.

I had many opportunities of observing the new privileged class, the specialists. Those who occupy the best-paid positions live with a certain degree of modest comfort, and are even beginning to revive the old forms of hospitality. Occasionally a few friends assemble at night to take tea together; and the display of cakes and sandwiches is on the generous side. Afterwards there is music and highbrow talk. But gatherings of this kind are few. Most people are too poor even to contemplate sharing a crust with another, and too preoccupied with the struggle for existence to waste time on tea-parties.

No one can possibly live on his earnings. Everybody is on the hunt for money, and the only way to get money is to sell something or secure a commission on something that is sold. What an odd ending to an experiment, the purpose of which was to abolish money and the greed for it!

It is remarkable how, in spite of all the destruction, all the searchings and confiscation, people have managed to conceal treasures and to retain small articles of property, many of which had little or no value before but have now become precious and saleable. A special type of middle-man who conducts these private transactions has appeared on the scene. Some of the most successful (and most unscrupulous, I was told), bore names that once were honoured. This information did not surprise me. For Revolution is a sudden thrust back into primitiveness; a smashing of everything, a call to the beast in man to show itself. . . . The peasants became cannibals, and workers plundered and murdered. As for the nobility, a good few could not stand the prospect of a miserable existence and became spies in the service of the Bolsheviks or turned cheats; whilst many of the intelligentsia found that their superior knowledge came in handy in the practice of low cunning and criminality. Everyone's psychology changed. I remember meeting with a man in Moscow who in pre-revolutionary days had a saintly reputation. At once he invited me to take tea with him, and produced an electric kettle which he manipulated by adroitly tapping the wire intended for lighting purposes, thus avoiding the extra charge required for heating. He earned only 10s. a week, and had a wife and child to maintain.

The struggle for a livelihood is far more intense in Bolshevik Russia than in any capitalist country. And those who get worsted in it are soon in a desperate plight; for when they have sold everything that they can lay their hands upon to sell, there is no human agency to turn to for aid, no charitable organisation, no State help. They are face to face with death just as a man drowning in the middle of a deserted ocean would be face to face with death. One often comes across such people sitting in the boulevards or in the public gardens, with a hopelessly-beaten expression on their faces; and there they sit all day long, and often far into the night. Most of them are young or middle-aged. Nearly all the old people have long since vanished. One never sees them in public places; they sit at home brooding on the past. Nothing is more

striking in the life of the town than the rarity of old people in the streets ; those few who do come out have only one purpose—to beg.

Is it any wonder that so many of the survivors of the old bourgeois class regard their lives as finished, and look upon themselves as under sentence of death. “ I am dead. . . . I have been dead for several years,” said an intelligent man to me. And many others of this type spoke in the same fatalistic strain. “ We are dying a slow death ” ; or “ We are in decay.” Even young students at the University talk in this hopeless manner. What their younger brothers and sisters who are growing up will say one day, I do not know. Now they chatter verse about the Paris Communards and sing songs about Lenin and other heroes of the Revolution.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### COMMUNIST HOUSING EXPERIMENTS

MARX put in the forefront of his revolutionary programme the placing of the poor in the homes of the well-to-do, and Lenin, too, frequently emphasised the revolutionary importance of such a measure. Of all the tests to which Communism was subjected, that of housing was the most crucial; for it went to the heart of the social problem—to the intimate lives of the people. If not successful in that sphere, then Communism could not be successful anywhere.

In regard to housing, as indeed with all affairs which they took up, the Bolsheviks acted drastically, without thinking of consequences. When land was nationalised, decrees were simultaneously issued, municipalising all buildings, houses, tenements and furniture. These decrees were never carried out to the fullest extent. No attempt was made to put them into operation among the peasants. And in the towns it was left to the discretion of the municipalities to say which houses should be taken over. In Moscow and Leningrad all houses were municipalised, but in the smaller cities the decrees were applied mainly to the larger houses.

Complete chaos prevailed. Confiscation of property had been enforced with true revolutionary energy; the owners, terrified out of their wits, offered not the least resistance. But it is one thing to expropriate property; another to own it and manage it well. Having got rid of the old owners, the Bolsheviks were faced with the problem of finding new ones. It is a problem that they have not solved to this day.

In the beginning of the Revolution all the departments of the new Communist State were in disorder, and consequently were quite powerless to take possession of the houses which had been so rigorously seized. They were



even incapable of ascertaining how many dwellings belonged to them; for in the midst of revolution it was impossible to compile correct statistics. It must be remembered that in those days, the days of Militant Communism, thirty-five million citizens were subsisting (or starving) on the meagre resources of the State. As rents had been abolished altogether, there were no funds available wherewith to keep up property. Soon thousands of houses became derelict, for it was nobody's concern to look after them. The inhabitants did what they could to keep a shelter over their heads, but such reparation as they could undertake was necessarily slight.

Sanitation, water, light—all these services were free. But in many places sanitation and light ceased altogether. And water was supplied fitfully. In winter pipes burst and could not be properly repaired again, for neither plumbers nor materials were to be obtained. Cellars were flooded out, as a consequence of which foundations rotted and central heating broke down. Then the fuel famine came.

The woodwork of houses was appropriated for fires, and thousands of buildings were pulled down for no other purpose than to provide fuel. Never in the world's history has there been a greater orgy of destruction. No one could put a stop to it. The municipalities had no means wherewith to undertake repairs. And the committees of tenants, who made themselves responsible for what little management of the houses was possible, were equally powerless. The authorities stormed at the workers, who composed these committees, and accused them of having fallen under the moral corruption of their bourgeois neighbours. But nothing eventuated; for all initiative was paralysed. In abolishing the ownership of property, the Bolsheviks had abolished all incentive for taking care of property.

The Communist State came into existence for the purpose of controlling and distributing wealth. From this, it followed that it should have controlled and distributed housing accommodation. But what actually occurred was chaos, not control.

No one was entitled to living space unless licensed by some authority. Workers were given preference. Dis-

tribution of accommodation and furniture was of frequent occurrence, and never for a moment was the fear of eviction absent from the minds of tenants. This insecurity was one of the chief reasons why the maintenance of dwellings was not regarded as being the concern of anyone in particular. The people of the bourgeois class felt that they had no homes of their own, and that nothing belonged to them. From the moment that nationalisation was decreed the poor entered the apartments of the rich, and the great division of spoils began. Searches for arms were of common occurrence. And frequently an incident like the following happened.

A family living in a quiet street of a small provincial town has just gone to bed. There is a loud rat-tat at the door. Husband and wife at once get up, both are pale and perturbed.

"We must search the house!" says one of the soldiers belonging to the party standing at the doorway.

"What for?" asks the man.

"For arms!"

The soldiers enter and rummage the whole place. In one bedroom the daughter of the house is lying asleep, her arm is uncovered and upon it is a bracelet. She conceals her face with a blanket.

The leading soldier pulls the blanket from her face and tapping his revolver says, "Now, sister . . . get up at once. . . . We've got to do our duty. We must search everywhere." At the same time he slips the bracelet off her wrist.

The girl gets up shivering, the beating of her heart is audible. She is only wearing a chemise. At once her mother runs to cover her with a blanket. Meanwhile, the soldiers open the drawers in the dressing-table and fill their pockets with the contents.

It is nearly daylight. The search is over. "If you say a word, mother," exclaims the leading soldier to the trembling woman, "we'll return and show you what we can do." And again he taps his revolver.

The Bolsheviks shot many of these looters, but most of them succeeded in enriching themselves and escaping.

The working-class tenants entered the homes of the bourgeoisie in a bitter and resentful mood. In spite of all their swagger they did not feel in their element. They knew that the people whom they had plundered and who lived in adjoining rooms, were hostile. And a good many of them could not bring themselves to believe that the furniture which they had seized was really theirs. Most of them did not know how to take care of decent furniture; and spitefulness led others to indulge in senseless destruction and to behave like conquerors, as the authorities themselves said in one report. Men in muddy boots sprawled on divans; or chopped wood on polished parquet floors until the ceilings below fell in. And women put dirty saucepans on tables covered with plush cloths.

The State itself was one of the chief instruments of destruction. Government departments were created in large numbers. All these departments required to be housed; and a continuous shuffling of accommodation went on. Frequently a department on leaving one dwelling for another carried away most of the fittings and sometimes even the doors.

A mania for statistics prevailed. Hundreds of attempts were made to collect returns concerning the destruction and dilapidation of property, but these had to be abandoned, for so widespread was the devastation that the task was beyond the resources of the Soviets, who had very little money and few competent officials at their disposal. So much paper was wasted in these vain attempts at registration that its supply ran short.

The application of Militant Communism had proved as calamitous as an earthquake; thousands of houses were in ruins, and thousands more had completely vanished, leaving waste land where once there had been human habitations. The surviving houses were in a state of disrepair, for the proprietors had fled, and there was no one to take their place. Thus the Soviets had proved themselves to be more efficient in confiscation than in ownership.

During the early period of Militant Communism the management of the municipalised houses was entrusted to local Soviets or communes of workers. But owing to

the general chaos these bodies were rarely able to exercise their powers. Thousands of decrees and circulars were issued, but few of them were carried into effect. As far as the larger tenements were concerned, such little management as was possible was the result of spontaneous efforts by the inhabitants themselves, who formed committees for the purpose. Had they not taken this initiative they would have had no roofs over their heads, for their landlord, the State, was powerless to come to their rescue.

At last the Bolsheviks were forced to realise that the State was incapable of carrying out the duties and responsibilities of ownership. But they were reluctant to abandon the experiment altogether, and even had they been willing to do so, circumstances would have thwarted them. For no one desired to become owners of large derelict properties in a State the basis of which was expropriation of property.

Decrees were issued permitting of the demunicipalisation of small houses. The owners of these small houses could lease them for a period not exceeding twelve years, provided they charged no higher rent than was prescribed by law. If their houses contained more than eight rooms they were to place 10 per cent. of the habitable area at the disposal of the local Soviets. At the same time, the right to sell houses was restored.

The new policy was not very successful. In Moscow and Leningrad only a quarter of the houses were demunicipalised; in the provinces the proportion was much larger. Under the fear of eviction many tenants repaired their dwellings, but only to a superficial extent.

Few communal houses now survive. Most of the large houses and the tenements remain under the control of the local Soviets. But this control, as we have seen, was never enforced, and to-day it is purely nominal. The best houses have been assigned to government departments or nationalised industrial undertakings, and are occupied by the employés of these departments and undertakings.

Rents, as has been said, were re-introduced. Life had taught the Bolsheviks another bitter lesson. This lesson was that, unless rents were insisted upon, nothing could



be collected for maintenance. Rents were regulated, and continue to be regulated upon a class basis, and are charged according to the space occupied by the tenant, the unit being one square sagan (49 square feet); the workman pays the least, the bourgeoisie (comprising merchants, employers, traders and persons living on capital) the most. In addition, the bourgeoisie are required to pay a tax of 10 roubles (£1) per month per square sagan, which is devoted to building houses for the working classes. In some instances the highest rent paid is one hundred times in excess of the lowest. The following table compiled from official sources (*The Co-operative Housing Magazine*, No. 9, 1925) affords an idea of the rents charged and the distribution of classes in the Soviet Republic:

Social Divisions.	Proportion of total urban population in the Union.	Proportion occupied of all available housing space.	Average rent charged per square sagan* per month. (s. d.).	Proportion of total rent collected.
Workmen . . . . .	39·7%	33·52%	9½	18·95%
Public servants and salaried persons . . . . .	29·3%	37·02%	1 0½	27·57%
Unemployed . . . . .	14·3%	12·1%	2½	1·80%
Pensioners . . . . .	5·3%	2·81%	2½	0·42%
Independent workmen (tailors, blacksmiths, etc.) . . . . .	6·5%	8·46%	3 0½	18·81%
Professional workers . . . . .	1·0%	1·21%	4 0	3·60%
Bourgeoisie (Merchants, all employers, traders, and persons living on capital) . . . . .	3·8%	4·86%	8 0	28·85%

\* 49 square feet.

Rents have repeatedly been raised, and it is now fully recognised that they ought to be sufficiently high to defray the cost of repair and management, but owing to the poverty of the tenants it is impossible to carry this principle into practice.

In particular, it was the working classes, for whose benefit the whole experiment of Communism (with its invasion of the homes of the bourgeoisie) was undertaken, who suffered most from the housing catastrophe. The Revolution, the

purpose of which was to get rid of inequalities, ended by confirming what has always been human experience, that nothing of a material value is out of reach of the man with money. Despite the efficacy of the spy system and the horrors of the Terror, speculators and men of means always managed to get accommodation for themselves. They even bribed their way into the special communal houses, set apart for the workers attached to State factories; in some instances half the tenants of these institutions belonged to the merchant class.

Often those who had control of the houses (sometimes it was the local Soviets themselves) preferred to let accommodation to bourgeois tenants, because these bourgeois tenants paid the highest rents of all classes in the community.

The state of affairs was well described by the organ of the All-Russian Central Council of Trades Unions in its issue of June 13, 1923 :

“ The most painful problem for the mass of the workers is that of housing. There is not a town, not an industrial undertaking, in which the lack of habitable dwellings does not compel the worker to seek refuge in a cellar, a damp hovel, or filthy overcrowded hole, with all the objectionable features of the old barracks. In Moscow, it is enough to inspect one or two industrial undertakings chosen at random to realise the appalling situation. Tens and hundreds of apartments, given to the workers and their families during the October Revolution, are mysteriously returning to their former owners, to clever speculators, and representatives of the bourgeoisie. The workmen are in no position to contend with the Nepmen (speculators or new rich), who, in addition to their millions, possess influence in our own Soviet institutions. To this shortage of dwellings and progressive thrusting back of the workers are added excessive rents and insanitary conditions. Buildings are not repaired in time, and consequently deteriorate and fall to pieces. In half the houses the drainage system is no longer working, and heaps of filth accumulate in the courts, and even in the dwellings themselves. It must be admitted

that our industrial dwellings are beginning to resemble the barracks attached to the old factories, which used to be simply an agglomeration of repulsive hovels."

After a while the authorities decided that working-class control over houses must be re-established.

In 1924, before the year of office of the various committees of tenants had expired, the Government decreed new elections. These elections were conducted after a fashion, amazing even in Russia.

General meetings of tenants were called, and these meetings were forced to accept as president a Bolshevik official, sent specially for the purpose. Here is a recital of the procedure adopted in most instances: two lists of candidates were submitted, one of the non-proletarian tenants, and the other of the Communist fraction and its proletarian adherents in the house.

Usually the president began the proceedings by examining the voting qualification of all those present, and arbitrarily excluding many on the ground that they belonged to the exploiting class. When those excluded protested, he merely answered that their cases would be referred to higher authorities—a course which did not admit of an immediate decision.

Meanwhile the election was proceeded with, and the ranks of the bourgeoisie having thus been thinned, the Communists were elected. But in instances where such trickery did not yield the required result, the following procedure was followed: Ignoring altogether the list of bourgeois candidates, the president asked the meeting to vote solely on the Communist list.

The votes were counted, and invariably a big majority was registered against the Communists. At once the president disputed the majority, and declared the Communist nominees elected. Protests followed, whereupon the meeting was summarily closed. The tenants insisted upon a second, and sometimes even a third, meeting, but each time the same bluff was practised. Finally a delegation from both sides was chosen to effect a compromise, but the Communists demanded a representation of five

members out of seven. Consequently the negotiations broke down, whereupon the president announced that the Communist list of candidates was duly elected as the House Committee.

Protests to the Central Authority followed, but these protests were returned marked "No consequence," and an official notice was posted ordering the newly-elected committee to begin its work.

Later, in August 1924, a decree was issued declaring that all inhabitants of municipalised dwellings (with the exception of the bourgeoisie) had the right to form themselves into a co-operative society for the purpose of letting and managing such dwellings. A board is elected annually, which is responsible to the general meeting of members, to the local Soviets, and to the police. In reality it is a Communist authority, for the Communists rigorously control the elections.

Ever since the State got rid of the owners of house property it has been engaged on a quest for new ones. Unable to administer its vast estate, it has sought to make use of the tenants, who, finding that the old landlords had vanished and that the new ones could not help them, began to help themselves. But to preserve its dictatorship the State was bound to see that the Communists were in charge of every house, and that their spies were on every doorstep. Consequently the elections were "controlled," a word much used in Moscow to explain the otherwise inexplicable.

The financial position of the housing co-operative societies is not a very happy one. I have before me the budget of a typical house property in Moscow, containing 64 flats occupied by 430 persons. The total rent for the month of March 1925 was 450 roubles (£45). Of that amount, three-fifths represented the rents of 35 residents belonging to the shopkeeping and professional class; the remaining two-fifths was the proportion payable by workers and employés. The actual sum collected was 180 roubles (£9), the true value of which, after allowance has been made for inflation, was 45 roubles (£4 10s.). This sum was barely sufficient to pay the meagre wages of the staff. Money was owing for the collection of rubbish, and none was available



for lighting the staircase and the courtyard. The property, moreover, stood badly in need of repair.

An attempt is being made to promote house building on co-operative lines. In the days of Militant Communism, building, in all towns having a population of over 10,000, was exclusively reserved for State enterprise; but very few houses were erected. In 1921 the privilege of building was extended to private individuals and co-operative societies. Those who built houses were not to become the owners of them, but were to be granted leases. For brick and stone houses the period of lease was to be 49 years, for wooden houses 20 years. The results of this new policy were not encouraging. In 1923, for example, in 100 towns, 2000 houses were built, but of these 99 per cent. were small wooden structures. Capital was lacking and the State was distrusted. In 1925 the housing laws were modified again. The period of leases for wooden houses was extended to 40 years and for stone and brick houses to 60 years. And it was also decreed that while the lease lasted the holder could sell, mortgage or bequeath the property. But the stipulation was made that no family could own more than one building. At the same time it was enacted that newly-erected houses should be exempt from rates and taxes for 10 years, and from all restrictions as to rents chargeable. Thus class discrimination in housing accommodation was abandoned so far as new houses were concerned.

Co-operative building societies, composed of members of Trades Unions and of the Communist Party, are given special financial assistance and other privileges from the State. But owing to the dearth of materials and the general poverty these societies make little progress. Only the better-paid workmen, earning not less than 50 roubles a month (£5), can afford to belong to them; and not more than 30 per cent. of the workers come within this category. Workers are required to pay back to any society to which they belong a sum of 20 roubles (£2) monthly. Yet how can they possibly do so when their wages, in most instances, are only 25 or 30 roubles (£2 10s. or £3)?

The State is sincerely desirous of doing all that is possible

to give the workers better housing conditions. There is much discussion as to which type of dwelling would be most suitable for communal life, and of delightful plans and models there is an abundance. But when it comes to building the houses the design has to be dictated by the money in hand; and usually this money is so little that only dwellings of the smallest and most primitive character can be erected.

What little building actually is in progress is mainly directed towards the reparation of old houses. It has been estimated that the sum of no less than 2700 million gold roubles is required for the reconstruction of dilapidated houses, drainage and water systems throughout Russia. And this sum, let it be remembered, is only one item in the account for damages inflicted upon the nation as a consequence of revolution and counter-revolution.

Despite a marked improvement in the maintenance of property since the days of Militant Communism, housing conditions are still very bad. According to a census taken in 1923, 334,809 families were registered in Moscow as living in 189,496 apartments or flats. The population of Moscow is increasing, and is now estimated at 1,800,000, but the housing accommodation continues to diminish. In some manufacturing villages near Moscow the housing space available for each person is described as "coffin space." Of all the inhabited dwellings in the Moscow province only 307 are in a decent state of repair. Thousands of railwaymen are housed in railway carriages.

Reviewing the situation as a whole, the following facts stand out :

(1) That housing accommodation has diminished, while in the large centres the population has rapidly increased since 1921.

(2) That large numbers of people are housed in worse conditions than before the Revolution.

Meanwhile, the effect upon the health of the population is appalling. Whole families are compelled to live in single rooms. Most of these rooms are damp and depressing. The poorer people have been driven back into underground cellars, to which daylight never penetrates. In many

houses all the washing is done and dried in the living rooms. Baths are a luxury. Sheets are a rarity. A change of underclothing usually takes place once every few weeks, and in many cases once every few months.

It is a common occurrence for two and even three people to sleep together, and often the sick sleep along with the healthy. But in reality there are few healthy people in Russia. Typhus has been got rid of, but Dr. Siemashko, the Commissar of Health, told me that so dreadful were the sanitary conditions that a recurrence of epidemics was to be expected. Tuberculosis, always very prevalent in Russia, is to-day a devastating scourge. At least 60 per cent. of the town population are suffering from it. Several million cases of malaria occur annually. Last year there were 150,000 cases of cancer, a disease that was rare in Russia in pre-revolutionary times. Syphilis, which was always very prevalent, particularly in the villages, has reached the dimensions of a plague. Acute anæmia, trachoma, influenza, scarlet fever and neurasthenia are widespread.

So difficult became the problem of housing the increasing number of lunatics that the State determined to unload asylums, and to place the patients in charge of their relatives, thus reverting to a mediæval practice abandoned long ago on account of the inhuman treatment to which it gave rise. The suicide rate is abnormally high even for Russia, where self-murder was always largely practised. The hospitals are overcrowded, and there is still great scarcity of medical supplies, particularly of quinine. Nevertheless, in spite of all its afflictions, the population is increasing at the rate of two millions annually.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### FROM LONDON TO MOSCOW; LIFE IN A STATE HOTEL

Is it not strange that the only people who visit Soviet Russia nowadays are capitalists and socialists? And usually both return a little disillusioned. My companions on the journey from Riga to Moscow consisted of a party of Norwegian capitalists whose purpose in going to Russia was to negotiate for a concession, a young American banker, and a Communist who had eluded the police after being involved in some riots at Hamburg, and was making for Moscow, the sanctuary of all hunted Bolsheviki. The head of the capitalist delegation was a young Jew, whose travelling equipment was luxurious, and who, judging both by his dress and conversation, was a man of some taste. The communist had with him only a shabby little suit-case containing no more than a change. The two men, the capitalist and the communist, were soon on very friendly terms. "An idealist . . . a very good man," said the capitalist to me. And the communist spoke equally well of the other.

None of us had the least idea of what conditions in Russia would be like. The picture on the frontier reminded me of a scene from a musical comedy rather than one from real life. There was certainly plenty of colour in it. The passport officer who boarded the train wore a handsome waisted tunic, and cherry-coloured pantaloons with wide golden stripes. In the little restaurant, located in a picturesque wooden structure, was a counter filled with Russian delicacies (including caviare), behind which stood a bright young woman with painted face and lips, wearing a short skirt, high boots and silk stockings. And close by was a barber's shop which smelt strongly of powder and perfume, served by a giant, dressed up to resemble an



artist, in a vivid green shirt and red tie. His long black hair was brushed majestically back.

When still within a few hours of Moscow, a middle-aged man got into the train. He wore a little portrait-badge of Lenin, from which everyone concluded that he was a Bolshevik, and began to regard him with amiable wonderment, as though he had dropped from another planet. He was surprised at the silliness of the questions that were put to him as, for example, "Is there bread in Moscow?"

(Yet Moscow is well within four days' journey of London; and were it not for stupid frontier restrictions could be reached within fifty-two hours of leaving Charing Cross.)

The first surprise was to find that there were porters at the station wearing white aprons just as the porters did in old Russia. Most of the foreign passengers had an idea that everyone in Russia was a thief. This accounted for their hesitation in handing over their luggage to the porters, and their evident fussiness once it had left their hands.

Experience on this and many similar occasions convinced me that the Russian porters are as trustworthy as ever they were, and that is saying a good deal.

Our next surprise was to find many automobiles and cabs plying for hire outside the station. They all looked very much the worse for wear, it is true, but their condition mattered little to travellers who had not expected to find them there at all. . . . There was a wild rush for the foreigners. The drivers of the automobiles asked 14s. to take two persons (with some light luggage) to the centre of the town, a distance not likely to occupy more than 20 minutes at the outside. I decided that a cab would be cheaper. At first I was a little puzzled as to how to approach the drivers. In the old days no one ever hired a conveyance without resort to bargaining. I never imagined for a moment that such a system had survived. I felt sure that even so sturdy a rebel as the *isvoschik* must have been subdued in a country where the Terror reached everyone.

"Savoy Hotel," I said to the first driver.

"Please!"

"But how much?"

"Ten roubles" (£1).

"Ten roubles!" I repeated in astonishment. I understood at once that it was necessary to haggle. "A rouble," I offered.

"A rouble!" he exclaimed in a whining voice. "Why, a rouble is only the price of two cups of tea, barin."

So the respectful address "barin," belonging to feudal days, was still used in Communist Russia.

(When I reached the hotel I was greeted as "Citizen.")

We agreed upon three roubles.

"Well—and how's life in Moscow?" I asked as we trundled along over the cobble-stones at a pace to fit the price.

"Bad . . . taxes are terrible. Everything is expensive."

All the shops were open and the streets were full of life. But I felt at once the strangeness of the atmosphere. The roads were bad; our wheels stuck in ruts; and carts got in the way and drivers shouted excitedly. The people on the pavements were dressed in old clothes, and slouched along with a depressed air. There was nothing European about the scene. I could not think for a long while of what place it reminded me—and then suddenly Pekin wrote itself on my mind. Moscow, I know, was always called Asiatic; never, I think, in its long history has it looked so Asiatic as to-day. Many Bolsheviks say that it is destined to be the capital of the new world of Eurasia, a world composed of the Federated Socialist Republics of Europe and Asia.

When I reached the Savoy Hotel I found that there were no vacant rooms. I had to wait some hours before obtaining accommodation. Meanwhile, guided by a boy belonging to the hotel I went to have my photograph taken, in order to fulfil the Soviet regulations, which require that three photographs shall be given to the authorities when the passport is presented.

The boy smoked furiously all the way and, among other things, said that Lenin was the greatest man in the world.

When I got back I remarked to the porter that the boy smoked too much.

He laughed. Later, he told me that "the boy" had

been married and divorced and was about to marry again ; and another member of the hotel staff added that he could drink as hard as any man.

It was a particularly interesting experience to stay in the Savoy Hotel, for it was one of the two hotels owned and managed by the Foreign Office and reserved mainly for foreign visitors. One therefore actually lived in a nationalised establishment and gained first-hand experience of Soviet business achievement. The manager was a Pole and a member of the Communist Party. Most of the staff were Poles, too : Communism and patriotism sometimes go together.

The manager, I was told, had no power to discharge employés without first obtaining the consent of a staff meeting. But nevertheless everyone went in fear and trembling of him, for to offend him was to get into the black books, not only of the State, but also of the Communist Party as well. His concern for the comfort of his bourgeois guests was not excessive. I never saw him outside the office, and I only encountered him when I complained that, while I had telegraphed on a Monday, booking a room for Thursday, I had been charged as from Monday. But the one and only decent hotel in Moscow is monopolised by the State ; and hence its management is characterised by all the independence of a prosperous individual enterprise.

“ Go to the Foreign Office and complain there,” was all the satisfaction I could get. The servants were paid a pittance of a wage and were not allowed to receive tips. The payment of gratuities is sternly forbidden in Soviet Russia. It is regarded as a vicious survival of the old bourgeois world ; and in all stations and public places notices are posted declaring that tips degrade both the giver and the receiver. But as wages are so low, most people are ready to suffer degradation as far as the receiving side of the transaction goes. And so it was at the Savoy Hotel. No tips, no attention ; that was an understood thing. Even so, the service was bad. None was obtainable before 9 o'clock in the morning, and sometimes one would keep on ringing for an hour without getting any response. The

servants were evidently discontented with their conditions, and were constantly squabbling among themselves. Notice had to be given some hours beforehand of intention to take a hot bath; and as something frequently went wrong with the heating arrangements, it was not always procurable. Nor were bath towels regularly obtainable, for the lady whose duty it was to look after the linen did not arrive until 10 o'clock and sometimes 11 o'clock in the morning. Finally, the price was excessive; a hot bath cost six shillings. . . . Once I found a dead cat under the bath.

When I first arrived I could not sleep at night for the noise of rats. But the pest was soon got rid of. Here I must say that the place was kept scrupulously clean. In each bedroom both hot and cold water were laid on; and a telephone was provided, which no one was keen to use. It was said in Moscow that if one spoke through a telephone one might just as well talk direct with the G.P.U. There was an excellent little restaurant in the hotel, the manager of which wore the usual bourgeois dinner-jacket.

The charges were exorbitant, amazingly so. A hotel of the type of the Savoy would rank as second or even third-rate in Europe or America. Yet the charges generally were of the Ritz order, and in many instances considerably more. A plain cheese sandwich, for example, costs five shillings.

The charges, as I have said, were outrageous, but in addition a heavy tax was imposed, the amount of which increased automatically as the total of the bill went up. As a consequence, visitors called for their bills every few days, and paid promptly. No one could accuse the Soviet State of being tardy in collecting its debts.

One can meet with extortion and discomfort everywhere. But there was about the place a curiously depressing atmosphere of suspicion. Only foreign business men and one or two prominent Bolsheviks stayed there. Few Russians dared to venture on the premises. The porters eyed everyone suspiciously. And the guests kept aloof from one another; in the restaurant everyone spoke in a whisper. Every room had a story to tell of arrests or of



searchings. Outside, the hotel had a sinister reputation. Most people spoke of it as the place where the Government "put foreigners."

In the old days there were some efficient and luxurious hotels in Moscow. One of them, the famous Metropole, is now used as a Soviet Dom (or Home), where officials and their families are housed, and wears a very dilapidated appearance. Before the Revolution it was the centre of life—that is, of life of a sort. One can understand that it gave the Bolsheviks a special delight to take over such a place and live in it. But in its present condition it does no great credit to their sense of beauty. And, as has been shown, the Savoy Hotel which they established in its place is not a too convincing example of the advantages of State management.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### A PICTURE OF MOSCOW

A FIRST walk in Moscow is an interesting experience. One is constantly on the look-out for the unusual. And yet it is the usualness of everything that so insistently strikes the eye. The trams are running, shops, restaurants and cinemas are open, and the pavements are thronged with people, all doing what the people in any other city in the world would be doing at that identical hour: wandering about looking at the shop windows or passing to and fro on their way to different appointments and occupations. The garden in front of the Opera House had a neat and trim appearance, and a man was engaged with a hose watering the flowers. I strolled along two of the principal streets, the Kouznetsky and the Petrovka. One surprise after another greeted my eyes. First, a draper's shop, the window of which contained some wax figures dressed in the latest Paris fashions. And after that a man's shop, displaying patent leather shoes and soft hats. And then a florist's, exhibiting some choice blooms. And next door a jeweller's showing diamonds, pearls, gold and silver plate, all genuine old stuff. And finally a café with a sumptuous array of pastry on the counter inside—real Russian pastry of pre-revolutionary deliciousness. The coffee, too, was excellent, and not too dear (for Moscow) at sixpence a glass. As I sat and sipped it I imagined that a Labour delegation might report: "Life is quite normal in Moscow."

It is true that conditions are incomparably better than they were in the days when Militant Communism had brought everything to a standstill. Most Russians do not relish their present existence, but when they recall the tragic years 1921–1922 they say: "Well it could be worse. . . . One can get used to anything." And the younger generation has grown up with the Revolution and

has never seen any other life save the life of Soviet Russia. They think that Moscow is the most modern city in the world.

So a stranger in Moscow must judge for himself.

An advantage is to have known Russia in the old days, for then changes can be noted. This advantage was mine.

I must confess that to see at once so many evidences of usual life, where one had expected to find everything tragically unusual, had a soothing effect upon the senses. But where was the Revolution ?

It was not long before I found it. New Tsars have been raised up. But the methods of worship are the same as the old. Portraits of Lenin and Marx, the ikons of modern Russia, are prominently exhibited in all official places and in most of the shops, the proprietors of which are anxious to stand well with the ruling class. The favourite portrait of Lenin is that which shows him wearing a peaked cap and standing with one hand thrust into his pocket—a squat, thick-set figure. There is the familiar screwed-up, embittered expression on his face. One cannot purchase a non-political memento of Moscow, not even a picture postcard ; and the taking of photographs is forbidden. But everywhere the portraits of the revolutionary leaders are on sale, and also little badges on which their features are represented. A number of shops make a special display of Soviet emblems, of the hammer and sickle badge, of golden tassels for banners, and of stars and various military adornments.

In pre-revolution times there were numerous shops in Moscow where one could buy silver-gilded ikons and church ornaments. To-day it would be hard to find one. But even revolutionary Russia still has a taste for gilded things.

One's attention is arrested by a shop window, full of brightly-coloured caricatures of religious and sacred subjects. It is the window of the premises where one of several atheistic journals produced in Russia is published. All these journals boast of a large circulation.

The Russians have a genius for buffoonery ; and the Bolsheviks make the most of it in their war against Christianity. Their caricatures of sacred persons are, of course, revolting to a religious man ; but, if artistic talent can be in vulgarity, such quality is certainly not lacking in

these blasphemous productions. The editor told me that there was a big demand for his journal in the United States.

Yes, it is true that Moscow has changed, as all Russia has changed. More than any other city, it is typical of Bolshevism, and perhaps on that account less so of the whole of Russia. It is the capital, the headquarters of the dictatorship, and the home of the bureaucracy. "Life is boiling there!" is a remark one frequently hears. The city is packed with people; a family of five or six living in a single room is of common occurrence. Leningrad and many provincial towns have emptied themselves; but Moscow is filled to overflowing. In particular, the magic of Moscow has seized upon the younger generation.

"I must go to Moscow," says a young girl in the provinces.

"And why must you go to Moscow?" asks her mother.

"Because there they know and understand everything, because Moscow is everything," she answers enthusiastically.

And forthwith she sets off alone to Moscow. Thousands like her do the same. Thus children light-heartedly abandon their parents. . . . And so life is boiling in Moscow. There the Bolsheviks make all their grand plans, and there all the congresses (including those to unite the proletariat of all the world) are held.

Moscow is a city of delegates and bureaucrats. The latter, it is officially stated, number 300,000. The State is everywhere. All the big buildings are occupied by government departments, over many of which the Red Flag (a little worn, weather-beaten, and pinkish now) is flying, while outside stand lines of automobiles. The large palace, on the Tverskaya, formerly the residence of the Governor-General, has been taken over by the Moscow Soviet and painted bright red; and the statue of General Skobelev, which used to stand opposite to it, has been replaced by a massive statue of a rugged-featured workman, symbolising Liberty, the very thing that does not exist in Bolshevik Russia. Then the officials of the Trades Unions have been installed in the former Foundling Home, a colossal building, at the entrance gate of which are inscribed







HEADQUARTERS OF THE THIRD [for COMMUNIST] INTERNATIONAL IN MOSCOW.

the words: "Palace of Labour." (The Bolsheviks frequently retain the word "Palace," and connect it with the new condition.) And within a stone's throw of the Kremlin, in a large white building, is to be found the head-quarters of the Red International, the staff of which numbers 1000, and is composed of all nationalities, including several Englishmen. Some of these departments are efficiently run; many are in a state of unceasing pandemonium. In the latter one meets with extraordinary incidents. To search for information is an exhausting undertaking. One is driven from pillar to post, referred to this person and to that—nobody knows whose business it is to deal with any particular question, and no one dare act on his own responsibility. Every room one enters is crowded; some of the occupants are chattering idly one to another, puffing at cigarettes all the while; others, with flustered expressions on their faces, are seated at tables at which queues of people stand awaiting attention. Not a moment passes in which the door does not open for some fresh person to enter; the habit of paying social calls, one to another, is much developed among Soviet officials. Time is no object. Appointments are made and not always kept; it is no exaggeration to say that one can enter a government department in Moscow in the morning in search of some piece of simple information, and not emerge until night, and then the chances are that one has not got what one wanted.

The scenes in some of the ante-rooms are reminiscent of a madhouse. On one occasion I went to see Lunacharsky. I found the entrance to his room barred by a minor Secretary, a frail young woman with a pale, anæmic face. Leaning against the wall just outside waiting for an opportunity to present a letter was a robust, red-cheeked, peasant youth, wearing a picturesque white sheep-skin hat; people attired in clothes of fantastic shabbiness pressed on all sides. In the room itself men were angrily competing for the use of the telephone, while several individuals, tired of waiting, had fallen fast asleep on chairs and divans, and one was loudly snoring. Suddenly Lunacharsky's Secretary emerged—a young man with a red flowing beard, wearing a belted Russian shirt, with green trousers and high

top boots—looking for all the world as though he had just stepped out of the Russian ballet. At once he was “mobbed”—mobbed is the true description of the reception he met with from the irate crowd, whose patience was exhausted with waiting; several altercations took place, and high words were exchanged. Then, in the midst of it all, Lunacharsky himself appeared, and after taking in the scene with a frightened glance, walked quickly out, looking neither to the right nor to the left.

Not all the departments were as bad as the Commissariat of Education; some, as I have said, were quite efficient; and here I met with marked courtesy and attention. But upon them all, efficient or not efficient, was the brand of Bureaucracy. Were I to describe the Government of Russia with truthfulness I would say that it is a Dictatorship of Secretaries.

Many of the largest shops are conducted by the State; above most of these are to be seen black signboards on which in gilded letters are the names of various State Trusts. Here it should be explained that the government-controlled industry has been divided up into Trusts. The series of fine arcades opposite the Red Square (in which Lenin's body lies) contains a number of State shops where almost anything can be bought, smart hats and dresses, men's evening clothes, diamonds, pearls, precious stones, and indeed all the requirements and most of the luxuries of modern bourgeois existence. But few people are to be seen in these arcades. What is the use of going there to be tempted if no one has any money?

In the Tverskaya, the principal street of Moscow, is located a famous shop called Elisseiev, which formerly was a Fortnum and Mason's on an immense scale, where all the delicacies and good foods of the world could be procured. This shop is now a state establishment. It is still the premier shop of its kind in Moscow. None of the more choice foreign delicacies are obtainable there, but nevertheless the variety and quality of the commodities exhibited are impressive. And the prices are not at all excessive compared with those prevailing in other shops.



The wine department is stocked with all kinds of wine, including many imported from abroad. Only champagne is highly priced at £2 5s. a bottle—but who can afford champagne in Moscow?

A visit to Elisseiev is a strange experience. The interior of the shop is a picture to look at with its tasteful display of fruit and good things. But it is a picture of still life. For the men behind the counters, dressed in white overalls, stand like ghosts, and a customer is a rare visitor. Should anyone chance to enter he is treated with great politeness, and whatever he purchases is neatly wrapped up and handed to him with a bow. Elisseiev is accustomed to dealing with pleasant-mannered people and, despite its proletarian proprietorship, keeps up the old ways. At night lights from immense glass chandeliers, which somehow or other survived the Revolution, illuminate the deserted scene. Outside gaping people stand, pressing their noses against the window, and I overheard the remark: "It's just as it was in the old days. If you've got money you can buy anything and anybody." Such is life.

The principal shop of Moscow is a municipal enterprise called the "Universal Store," which was formerly the property of the old-established British firm, Muir and Merelees. This shop is stocked with all the goods usually procurable at a general store, but the quantity is meagre and the quality inferior. There is a constant stream of customers passing through the establishment all day long, and a restaurant on the top floor is kept fairly busy.

I glanced at the menu. The price of a meal consisting of fish, mutton and kasha (a buckwheat porridge) was 2s.; other dishes of a special kind averaged 3s. There was nothing out of the way in these prices. But a glass of tea cost 8d., of coffee 9d., and of chocolate 10d.; these prices were dear.

Then I wandered round the store and took note of the prices of various articles of clothing: men's suits £20 to £30, men's soft hats 29s., silk ties £1, linen shirt £2, cotton shirt 14s., lady's ordinary coat £20, common print dress £10, men's boots £4.

In the fruit department I noticed the following prices for quantities of ten: apples 5s., oranges 6s. and pears 7s.

Muir and Merelees, I should explain, is accounted one of the cheapest shops in the whole of Russia. It is a shop frequented by all classes, including workers. On several occasions I saw long lines of people standing at a counter, waiting for a turn to make purchases of clothing. Business is brisk, I thought to myself. But later I learnt that the customers whom I had seen were employ  s of different State Trusts which could not pay wages in full, and so gave credit vouchers which were exchangeable for goods at the Universal Magazine (or shop). And thus the State piled up debt to itself in order to keep things going.

Outside other State shops, where cotton material for dresses is sold, one always sees long queues of women. Even in the depths of winter they stand there waiting patiently for admission. The explanation is that the State has an insufficient supply of cotton material, and is anxious lest too large quantities of what is available should fall into private hands. So it has decreed that no one shall be permitted to purchase more than ten yards; hence the waiting queue. The State is all-powerful, and there is nothing to be done but submit.

Many of the shops and restaurants are co-operative undertakings. One of these is the well-known Caf   Phillipova, the menu of which contains the following items :

#### Lunch :

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Meat Pie . . . . .	1	10
Fish . . . . .	1	10
Mutton and Rice . . . . .	1	10
Radishes in butter . . . . .	1	10
Sturgeon . . . . .	1	10
Caviare . . . . .	1	10
Sucking pig with kasha . . . . .	1	10
Kidney soup and pickled cucumber . . . . .	1	10
Pork cutlets . . . . .	2	0
Meat cutlet . . . . .	2	0
Goose with cabbage . . . . .	2	3
Mushrooms with cream . . . . .	2	6
Roast duck . . . . .	3	6

I have made only a few selections from the menu, but these are sufficient to show that a great variety of dishes is obtainable. At night the café is crowded with men and women drinking beer, and the atmosphere is reminiscent of Leicester Square. All over Moscow there are cabarets, some of which are co-operative undertakings. The famous Hermitage Restaurant is in this latter category. On the one or two occasions that I went there I found its garden deserted. Many customers, I was told, had been arrested, and for no other reason than that they had been observed by the spies of the Secret Police to have dined well on several occasions. A waiter narrated to me the following incident:

"One night a merchant was dining with some friends here. Suddenly, a G.P.U. man appeared from somewhere and, touching him on the shoulder, said: 'I've observed you eating goose and drinking champagne on three different nights. You must come with me!' And there and then the merchant left his goose and champagne, and was carried off to the nearest lock-up."

How can anyone spend a happy evening at a restaurant, knowing all the while that there are ghosts at the feast who may materialise into police at any moment? No wonder the waiters look glum and the customers miserable, for the atmosphere is sultry with suspicion.

The State has a number of shops of its own, and keeps a close watch on its rivals, the private shopkeepers. Taxation is heavy and shops are always being opened and closed.

I entered one shop to purchase a tablet of soap. And at once the shopkeeper began to pour out his troubles. "I pay 2s. 8d. per square sagene every quarter as rent for this little place," he said. "The State is my landlord and can charge what it likes. Then I have to pay £90 turnover tax every six months. And an income tax too! Also I have to contribute to the compulsory loan for the air fleet and am forced to pay subscriptions to the children's fund and other things. . . . Only the Jews can live; only they are clever enough to dodge the inspectors who are on the doorstep day and night. They fill their shops with things smuggled over the frontier. When it's too hot for a Jew

he thinks nothing of liquidating his business, and opening up somewhere else, or painting up another name over his shop and putting the business in the name of some relative."

A little while later I entered a small basement shop where buttons, pins, needles, ribbons, tapes and various odds and ends were sold. Behind the counter was an elderly woman. Near by was seated the erect figure of a man, whose eyes were closed in blindness; I judged that he was an ex-officer.

Following on my heels a young man entered. I stood aside and waited, for the newcomer appeared to be a person of authority. He was sparsely built, and his face was lean. A typical young Communist, so I thought. Under his arm he carried a bundle of books.

"Thirty roubles—I cannot—it's impossible!" I overheard the woman saying to him. "I have only this little place where I used to make a few roubles a month to keep myself alive. Yet they called me an exploiter and confiscated everything, even my bits of furniture. And I don't make 15 roubles a month now—not near it. How can I keep myself and my blind husband on that?"

"You must take one" (here the bully pointed to the books under his arm). "It's for the orphans of the Revolution. You're a 'bourjoui' and must pay—and that's all there is to it."

There was an angry tone now in his voice.

The blind husband rose to his feet; his lips quivered. But before he could speak the man with the books shouted:

"It's nothing to do with you! Sit down! The shop belongs to your wife. It's her with whom I have to deal."

"But 30 roubles! I cannot—it will take all my profits for two months. How are we to live?" the woman protested.

"Very well, pay by instalments—half—15 roubles each month."

The frightened woman consented, and that was how the affair ended.

"He's a Communist," she remarked when he had gone. "What else could I do?"



Such incidents, I learned, were not infrequent. Collectors for different philanthropic enterprises are frequently to be met with in Moscow, and there have been many frauds in connection with their activities. But simple people give to them because they are afraid of the consequences that might follow upon a refusal.

The State has the private trader completely in its hands. For not only is it the landlord of the premises which he occupies and the assessor and collector of taxes, but also the source whence he must obtain his supply of goods. Determined that private enterprise shall be kept in check, the State sees to it that the trader does not get the best goods, and is never in too great a hurry to fulfil his orders. Nor has the trader any means of ventilating his grievances, for, as a merchant, he is deprived of the vote.

None of the shops are well-stocked in Moscow, State or private. And such goods as can be obtained are all of second quality.

There are some exceptions, of course. For the most part these exceptions consist of shops which are supplied with old stock. One frequently comes across a shop filled with relics of what the Bolsheviks call "old bourgeois culture," including many tasteful articles such as one might find in Bond Street, mingled with little intimate possessions, a safety razor or a set of hairbrushes or some ladies' underclothing. How these things got into the shops no Bolshevik could ever explain to me. I have no doubt that most of them represent the loot of revolution, the remainder being composed of articles which the old bourgeoisie had sold and were still selling to keep themselves alive.

The markets too were stocked with the same character of goods. One got the impression that all the homes of Moscow had been ransacked, and that a vast second-hand sale was in progress. Never, I imagine, in the history of the world has there been such a turning out and interchange of household goods and personal belongings. Nothing has been spared—not even the most intimate little relic—and all to give a new bourgeoisie a start in the world!

I discussed with many people (particularly housewives) the interesting question as to which were the best and the cheapest, State or private shops? Opinion was very divided. But everyone agreed that the greater variety of goods was to be found in the latter. And in spite of all the restrictions imposed upon them they manage somehow to exist. The Revolution has taught everyone in Russia, including the Bolsheviks, that in order to survive man must trade. And now that trade is again legally permissible, the population of Moscow has been seized with a passion for selling. It is true that trade is hampered with all sorts of restrictions, but no longer is it a crime in itself as it was in the days of Militant Communism. Several years have passed since the New Economic Policy was introduced, and still groups of people may be seen standing in front of shops, their faces lighted up with excitement at the spectacle of window displays. "You can't imagine," said more than one person to me, "what a joy it is to have the shops again!"

The life of the pavement is full of incident. The atmosphere is strained. Everyone is rushing madly about in search of money. They jostle and elbow one another, and squabbles are frequent.

"Can't you look where you are going, you idiot?" says one man to another who has bumped up against him.

"You're an idiot too!" comes the answer.

It is evident that the nerves of the people are on edge, and that many of them have become quite childish.

Yes, it is true that life is boiling in Moscow. And there is much hissing, much steam.

Dozens of wooden kiosks of attractive designs have been erected; thousands of hawkers line the pavements, selling every conceivable article of human need or fancy; caviare and ham sandwiches, French scents, boots, dress lengths, soaps, towels, books, writing paper, sunflower seeds, fruit, and "original Africansky monkeys" on a string. These hawkers are composed of all sorts and conditions: intelligent people, fallen upon evil days, peasants fresh from the village, and still smelling of soil, members of co-operative societies, carrying little delicacies hygienically covered

with glass, and wearing neat caps on which the names of their organisations are inscribed in yellow letters. The women have spotless aprons, and are sometimes accompanied by chubby-faced children of all ages.

No matter how late (or early) the hour, child hawkers are to be seen in the streets!

And the beggars!

The first day I arrived in Moscow I handed to one of these a thousand-rouble note, which in the Emperor's day was worth £100 or more, and which I still imagined was worth a few pence.

Passionately she seized my hand and kissed it. Then she glanced at the note for the first time—and at once crumpled it up, and, with a vulgar expression of disgust, threw it at my feet. . . . I had not known that it was almost worthless.

A whole chapter could be written on these Russian beggars. With what fervour, what artistry they make their appeal; the Russian soul at its best and at its worst.

A man kneels in the mud and, beating his head on the pavement, outstretches his arms and cries in an agonising voice to passers-by; the mediæval figure of a peasant, all in rags and tatters, crosses himself and asks piteously for a kopeck; a woman, with a refined face and wearing clothes shining with shabbiness, creeps up and whispers her request; in the Kouznetsky district, Moscow's Bond Street, a tall, blind ex-officer of aristocratic bearing can be seen in the same place every day—he stands stock still, with arms at his side, a silent, appealing figure, and at night time an old opera singer sings selections from well-known operas, and an aged flute player renders melancholy Russian airs with such depths of feeling as to make one wish that one were dead. . . .

Art and misery everywhere. How true, I thought, was Lord Balfour's famous gibe at the Bolsheviks: "Rich men made poor, but not poor men made rich!"

The crowd in the streets was not so badly dressed as I imagined it would be after all that I had heard. But, nevertheless, it looked very drab—quite in keeping with

the dilapidated air of the city. In winter everyone wore old overcoats. Since the beginning of the Revolution few people have bought new clothes. Garments have been turned and re-turned, pressed and re-pressed, patched and stitched and generally made to look a pathetic best.

And what a variety of costumes! Nothing too eccentric to be worn. For example, a threadbare morning coat, stained flannel trousers and peaked cap, or green trousers, top boots, sheepskin coat and white fur hat, or a well-cut lady's coat made from an old flour-sack. How dull and depressing a modern city looks when no smartly-dressed women are to be seen in its streets!

In summer Moscow became more gay. All the women were sunburnt and were clad in light dresses. Some of them possessed only one dress, which they had to wash and iron themselves every day. Once more colour and brightness in the streets and everyone optimistic!

But even if people could afford to dress they would not dress too smartly in Russia. For to be well dressed is to attract the attention of the spies of the Secret Police, always on the hunt for speculators.

When I first went to Moscow people asked me: "Can you pick out a Communist in the street?" I had to confess that I could not. But after a while I was easily able to do so.

Not all the Communists dress alike, but there is a uniformity about their clothes, and that is precisely what one would expect in a machine-made State. But it is not to be imagined that the Communists have no leanings towards fancifulness; the consequences, as might be expected, are sometimes reminiscent of the extravagances of the newly-rich.

Many of the young women wear a strange compound of masculine and feminine attire—utilitarian leather coats, short skirts, high boots—sometimes of a violent yellow colour—with red handkerchiefs coquettishly wound around their heads.

And the men wear semi-military tunics of black or



khaki or white, according to the season of the year, the chief advantage of which is that collars can be dispensed with. Many of them sport ludicrously wide baggy breeches and top boots, which give them the appearance of musical comedy squires!

Some of these "Red" dandies curl their hair, paint and powder their faces and cover themselves with cheap scent.

In the streets one frequently meets processions of sombre-looking working people, marching behind red banners (on which in gold letters are inscribed revolutionary mottoes), or of well-clad soldiers of good physique—one cannot help contrasting the alert expressions on their faces with the sheepish look that was stamped upon the countenances of the men who had to serve the Emperor.

On every occasion in life the Russian resorts to music; and always these street processions march to music, sometimes led by a band playing revolutionary songs—or "hymns," as they are called—sometimes by a soloist, the whole assembly joining in the chorus.

The proletariat has found new words in which to express itself, words breathing martial ardour and class hatred, but the tunes are often the same old Russian tunes, full of wistful sadness. Not a single note of tranquillity—nothing but gloom, restlessness, aggressiveness, struggle.

War is glorified; bloodshed is honoured. One favourite song, for example, relates the conversation between an old peasant mother and her son who has been summoned to join the Red Army.

"Don't be a soldier, Vanya. The Bolsheviks can get on without you. Your mother became grey from suffering for you, and there's a lot to be done in the house and in the fields."

To which he makes reply: "Don't howl. If all were like you—blind—what would be left of Moscow and the whole of Russia? . . . I am not leaving my old mother for dancing and feasting. I am going into the Red Army to fight to the death against the bourgeoisie—contemptible crowd! What use is it to talk with the priest and the rich man?—just thrust a bayonet into his stomach: that's all.

If you don't surrender, then you must die! Heaven will be dearer when fought for—not the bloody-red heaven of world-devourers, but Russia, free land, Soviet land.”

Frequently, too, one meets processions of Communist youths, or of Communist children called “Pioneers,” many of whom were formerly orphans of the gutter, but are now clean, strong-limbed and presentable. The boys are dressed after the manner of scouts, in grey or khaki, with red handkerchiefs round their necks; many of the girls wear red handkerchiefs on their heads and carry little red flags.

They form up in detachments, march with military precision, and, when at a check, mark time vigorously. Always there is much bugle-blowing, much military display.

On all occasions Communist Russia demonstrates. To demonstrate is part of the system, part of the deliberate plan to keep revolutionary ardour at boiling point.

The least international friction and a demonstration, ending in violent speeches, is arranged. Public emotion is turned on like a water or gas supply . . . the stage management of the Revolution is extremely well done. Even when they go to their games the Russians form up in columns and march behind bands and banners, or sing in chorus.

I went to some sports arranged by the Moscow Municipal Workers' Union; the President stood on an eminence; several thousands of innocent-faced Communist children formed up in detachments and marched on to the field; banners of red and gold, on which revolutionary mottoes were inscribed, were presented and fiery speeches delivered; the assembly was asked if it was ready for the struggle against the bourgeoisie, and a chorus went up, “We are.”

Whereupon the band struck up the “International,” after which the young sports-people solemnly marched past in military fashion, along a track lined at intervals with Red soldiers. Then the President of the Union and his “staff” of Union officials inspected each detachment, the President, a huge giant who towered above the rest, holding his hand at the salute the whole time.

As I recall Moscow to my mind's vision now, its most

conspicuous feature was these processions crawling through the streets at all hours of the day and night; endless marching and parading; drum-beating and bugle-blowing; the tramping of masses, the organisation of big groups; the rise of Militant Socialism, ominous and impressive. The deep-sounding bells of Moscow's hundreds of churches ring as before; but no longer are they the only sounds that summon the masses to contemplation. On the bells of the Kremlin the "International" is played every night.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### AT LENIN'S TOMB

THE Red Square, so named because of Ivan the Terrible's bloody deeds, is the culminating point of Moscow's history ; it is also holy ground for the Revolution ; here to Lenin's tomb come processions of pilgrims, just as in the old days they went to the tombs of the saints ; here, just below the walls of the Kremlin, in a pleasantly cultivated space set apart, rest the bodies of noted leaders who succumbed during the Revolution, and here, in the presence of these spirits of the past, are held all great assemblies and demonstrations.

From behind the embattled walls of the Kremlin rises the expansive low dome of the former Senate House or Court of Justice, now used as a meeting-place for the Central Executive Committee or supreme authority of the Soviet Republic. From the dome the Red Flag is always flying.

All gates to the Kremlin are guarded by heavily armed sentries. Commissars are constantly passing to and fro ; some of them occupy apartments in the palaces inside, where their domestic comfort is that of ordinary bourgeoisie. But the fear of assassination is always present ; hence no ordinary mortal can pass the gates without a special permit.

Inside the Kremlin are stored many of the precious treasures confiscated during the Revolution, including the Crown jewels, which, contrary to ill report, are safe and intact. Here, also, the work of restoring sacred ikons is in progress, work which is one of the greatest accomplishments of the Revolution, and which is revealing paintings so exquisitely beautiful, so unlike anything yet seen, that one day they will take the world's breath away. . . . Mme. Trotsky supervises this work ; and she is a Jewess.

Lenin lived and laboured in the Kremlin. It is not strange, therefore, that he should be interred beneath its







PEASANT WOMEN VISITING LENIN'S MAUSOLEUM IN THE RED SQUARE, MOSCOW.

walls. But the manner of his interment is strange—quite in keeping with the fantastic side of the Revolution.

Lenin often said: "Revolution is an art." And his comrades have borne that saying well in mind. His body lies always in state; a supreme and impressive example of propaganda.

When I first visited Moscow the body was accommodated in a temporary wooden structure; and the square was littered with building material from which the new mausoleum was being created. . . . On the opposite side of the square there was an office where soldiers gave out permits "to view"; to foreigners they were particularly courteous.

The little wooden structure in which the body lay was railed off. In the space within were about a dozen sentries, several of whom were mounted. The men on foot were dressed in heavy sheepskins, and had no pretence to smartness. They lounged idly about, gossiping with the spectators on the other side of the railings. No striding up and down after the manner of sentries in the West.

One or two policemen mingled with the soldiers. They had their hands stuffed in their pockets. Leaning up against a bit of wood was a portrait of Lenin in a red and black frame, the glass of which was obscured with snow. It recalled to one's mind the portraits advertising "stars" outside the cinemas and the theatres.

The sentry at the entrance examined the permit and stood aside; there was a little staircase to be ascended, a short corridor to be crossed, and then another little staircase, all blazing with red carpet, led down to the death chamber.

But what an unusual death chamber! The moment one entered one's sight was almost blinded with colour: the walls were draped in red and black; at one end were two banners, one red and gold, the other black and gold, each with handsome tassels; at the other end, propped against the wall, was the lid of the coffin itself, covered with pleated red cloth.

In a pit or depression placed on a long block of wood rested the coffin; it, too, was covered with red pleated

material, and from each corner were suspended large black and gold tassels. On the ceiling above the emblem of the hammer and the scythe had been worked out in red, and powerful electric lights were burning at either side.

Around the little pit in which the coffin lay ran a small platform; the visitor entered at one side and made his exit at the other.

The upper part of the coffin was covered with a glass lid. . . . Lenin was dressed in a simple light khaki-coloured tunic coat. On his breast rested a Red decoration. The face was waxen grey; the features horribly shrunken. The guard would not allow us to remain more than an instant. . . . "Hurry, hurry," he said, "or the temperature will change." There were two thermometers suspended on the wall. Some peasants entered and crossed themselves. The guards remonstrated: "This is not a church! There are no saints here!" The peasants looked bewildered.

As I went on my way I recalled the fate of Marat. With pomp and circumstance, Marat's body was laid to rest in the Pantheon in 1794, only to be carried out with ignominy a year later, while the angry mob went all over Paris smashing busts of the dead leader wherever they could find them.

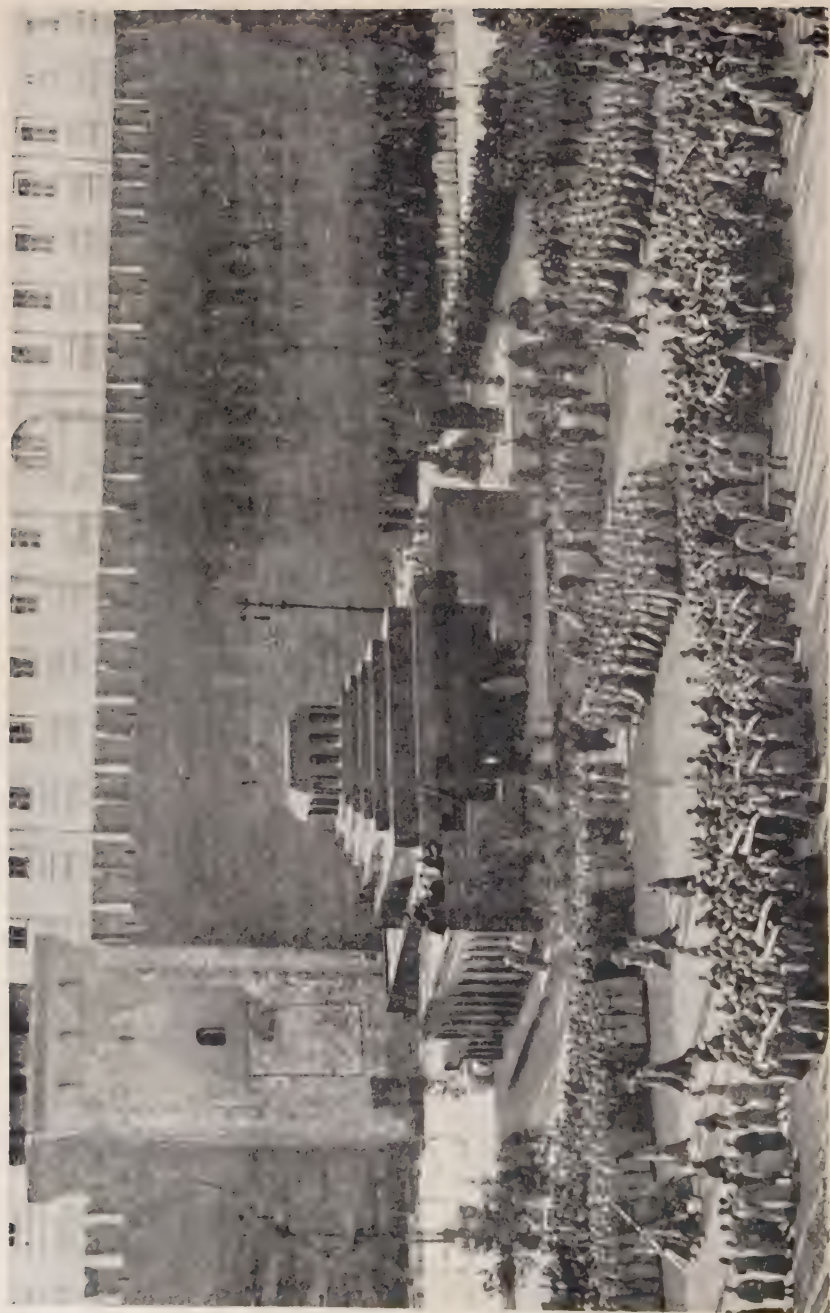
It was already dusk and the sky above was black with flocks of moving crows. It began to snow; all the passers-by were muffled up to keep the cold out. I could not help thinking at that moment of the remark which Lenin is said to have made at a private gathering before he died: "We are dead, but there is no one to bury us."

There was much mystery about Lenin's last moments. It was said, for example, that he died of a loathsome disease, that before his death he became a religious maniac, and that his brain when examined was found to contain green matter. Those who knew him intimately say that he was bitterly disappointed with much that had happened during the Revolution. No doubt he said, as Danton had said just before his death, "I am disgusted with all humanity."

As I walked through the Red Square with a companion







A PARADE OF RED ARMY DETACHMENTS BEFORE LENIN'S MAUSOLEUM IN THE RED SQUARE, MOSCOW.  
WITH THE WALLS OF THE KREMLIN IN THE BACKGROUND.

we discussed together whether or not Lenin was really a great man. Great in will, great in fanatical devotion to a cause, great in the quality of self-sacrifice, all this he certainly was.

Lenin's tomb was closed for a while. It was said that it had been found necessary to re-embalm the body. When I heard this I thought of the incident of Father Zossima's death in Dostoevsky's "Brothers Karamazov." Father Zossima was a saint, and the peasants have a superstition (for which there is a scientific basis) that the bodies of saints do not decay. When, therefore, Father Zossima's body went the way of all flesh there was a sensation.

Lenin's body now rests in a more elaborate mausoleum. It is a square, brown-varnished wooden structure of no particular style, but on classic temple lines, plain to austerity, and consisting of squared columns and stairways ascending to a culminating little platform.

On the front above the entrance the name Lenin is inscribed in big black letters; and from the flat roofing on either side meetings are addressed. In the railed-off space around the mausoleum flower-beds have been arranged; when I left Moscow rose trees were blooming there. . . . The structure and its surroundings reminded one of a garden suburb; perhaps it was because the building was of wood and so new, and the flower-beds so young-looking.

At night white electric lamps burn in the topmost colonnade; the entrance, too, is lit up, showing as a background the eternal emblem of the hammer and the scythe in red. And the whole square is brilliantly illuminated with powerful electric arc lamps; the rest of the city is plunged in darkness.

At the south end of the Red Square is the famous Cathedral of St. Basil (where Napoleon stabled his horses), with its bulbular domes, twisted into extraordinary shapes and painted in all the colours of the rainbow. It has been converted into a museum, and in its dingy chapels sacred paintings of true Byzantine severity are exhibited; close

by, and not far away from the spot where Lenin lies, is a round stone platform known as the Place of the Skulls, where executions took place in ancient times; and from the Kremlin wall behind rises a little tower, where Ivan the Terrible stood and gloated over these executions.

Near by, too, is the Spassky Gate, or Gate of the Redeemer, leading into the Kremlin, and above it still remains the picture of the Saviour, wrought in gold. Below a Red soldier paces up and down.

And on the opposite side of the square is the series of magnificent arcades three storeys high, and containing a thousand shops and offices. To-day only the ground floor is in full use; here a Government Trust occupies nearly all the shops.

Thus, within sight of Lenin's tomb one gets a picture of his State Capitalist policy. . . . Almost anything is procurable in the Government Arcade—fans, dresses, fashion books, plate, diamonds, pearls, precious stones—all the paraphernalia of luxurious life.

It is difficult for us to realise in this country, so remote from Russia, the enormous reverence in which Lenin is held by the Communists. It is a reverence of a kind which in the past has only been bestowed upon the founders of great religions; it is more than canonisation; it is an attempt at deification.

I have read numerous addresses by Communist leaders, but not a single one that did not contain quotations from Lenin's speeches. "What Lenin said"—by this the Revolution lives and gropes its way. His words are the Bible of the Bolsheviks. To question their authorised interpretation is to be guilty of the crime of heresy, in the most mediæval sense of the word.

An institute is to be built in memory of the dead leader; here all his writings will be accumulated. At present these writings are scattered all over the world—in London, New York, Berlin, Vienna and Switzerland. An eager search is being made for them everywhere; the least scrap of paper on which the dead leader pencilled a few hasty notes is seized upon and treasured as a relic.



While I was in Moscow it was announced that some of his most valuable papers had been recovered from the Polish General Staff. In what manner they were recovered was not disclosed. Thirteen volumes of his works have already been published; when completed the issue will number fifty volumes.

The bookshops are full of literature about him. As soon as one enters one of these shops the assistant thrusts under one's notice a biography of Lenin containing a photograph of him when a boy; and asks at the same time, "Isn't he nice-looking?" It is true; Lenin had a very open and thoughtful face when he was a boy. Life made him bitter. . . .

Portraits of Lenin are to be seen everywhere—in Government offices, courts of justice, railway stations and also in the hotels, restaurants, cafés and shops, for there is not a tradesman in Moscow so bold as not to display it. No ikon in the Holy Russia of the old days was more widely spread.

Sculptured heads of Lenin, too, are everywhere to be seen. I have been present at meetings of workmen's unions to which such heads were presented by other organisations. No idol has ever been handled more reverently or regarded more affectionately. Sometimes the portrait of Karl Marx is put alongside that of Lenin; but not always. In Moscow they speak more often of Leninism than of Marxism.

After visiting Lenin's mausoleum I left the Red Square by the Voskresenskiya Gate, just outside of which is the little Iberian chapel, with its dome of blue, sprinkled with golden stars. Here always came the Tsars before entering the Kremlin; here, too, is deposited the celebrated Mount Athos Virgin, which is reputed to have worked more miracles than any other image in Russia, and was formerly carried in great state in a carriage drawn by six horses wheresoever its services were needed.

Beggars with bowed heads and outstretched hands lined the path to the entrance—picturesque beggars in rags and tatters. The interior, which is only the size of a small

room, was crowded; several Soviet officials were there—I recognised them by the badge of the hammer and the scythe—and they, too, were crossing themselves and devoutly praying. Against a background of gold formed by the ikonostas a priest, attired in purple vestments, sang the service. Masses of candles flickered softly through the mist of incense. . . .

My mind went back to Lenin lying in his Red mausoleum, not far away; and, of course, one thought of what Voltaire said about man's need to invent a God.

A few days later I visited an exhibition of social hygiene in the Petrovka, one of Moscow's main thoroughfares. There I saw lying exposed in glass cases the skeletons of saints: of Feodosie Tchernigovsky, of Innocentie of Siberia and of Seraphim Sarovsky, all celebrated in Russia's calendar of holy men.

In pre-revolutionary days the bodies of saints, wrapped up in cloths and covered with velvets and silks, were exhibited in open coffins in the monasteries and churches, and the devout prayed over them and kissed them. Among the simple peasants the belief prevailed that these bodies never decayed. After the October revolution Bolshevik commissions visited all the monasteries and churches, stripped off the wrappings and exposed the fleshless skeletons.

In many instances the real limbs were missing and artificial ones of rags or cardboard painted pink had been substituted. The exhibition in the Petrovka was for the purpose of showing that saints after death decayed like ordinary mortals; and, to emphasise the point, the skeleton of a counterfeit coiner was put alongside those of the holy men.

Two counterfeit coiners quarrelled; one killed the other and kept the body in his room, where, owing to the combined action of heat and ventilation, it became mummified.

Peasant women visiting the exhibition went down on their knees before the skeletons of the saints, crossed themselves and prayed; several begged for some of the dust of the bones wherewith to rub their eyes and others brought with them holy water and sprinkled it over the

bones. They did not believe their own eyes but, speaking the language of Faith, said that God was testing the saints, that they were being subjected to new trials, or that they had fled, leaving behind them their bones. The institute is now organising a propaganda campaign in favour of cremation.

One evening later I went to a cinema. The story filmed was of a vicious man who fooled the people into believing that he was a saint. The whole idea was to make the priests look ridiculous: to represent them as drunken, licentious men.

As a piece of realistic acting the film was extraordinarily good, and it was immensely enjoyed by a large working-class audience, who chuckled with relish at the embarrassing situations in which the "holy man" was placed.

To add spice to the story it was announced that the plot was based on recently discovered documents of the reign of Alexander II. The film is typical of the anti-religious propaganda which the State, through the medium of its monopoly of the cinema industry, is waging everywhere throughout Russia.

The aim is to destroy faith in Christ and substitute for it faith in Lenin.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### MOSCOW AT NIGHT

Moscow is not well-lighted at night; and about one o'clock in the morning nearly all the street lamps are extinguished. People move about like shadows; armed watchmen, wrapped up in sheepskins, sit outside the shops, many of which are dimly lighted inside as a precaution against thieves. A faint little electric sign pathetically advertises the Universal Store. The Red Square is the one bright spot in the whole city. Here great arc lamps are burning, and the topmost colonnade of the mausoleum where Lenin's body lies in its crimson coffin is brilliantly illuminated.

There is life on the pavement all night long. Crowds pass to and from the theatres and cinemas. Gangs of young hooligans of both sexes parade the streets, smoking and shouting at the top of their voices, or take possession of the tram shelters, where they sit until the early hours of the morning.

People also sit in the public gardens and on the boulevards until a late hour, even in winter when there is snow everywhere and it is cold. No one desires to stay indoors. This is understandable. Poverty is at its worst within four walls; in these conditions the best of individuals becomes quarrelsome and spiteful. And so Moscow people prefer the streets to their homes and will spend their last kopeck in the pursuit of a little pleasure, that they may forget for a little while that there is such a thing as life.

All the big restaurants have been closed. The one exception is the famous Hermitage. I mentioned just now that the Red Square, where Lenin's body lies, is the only place in Moscow brilliantly illuminated at night. I made a slight mistake. The deserted garden of the Hermitage too is also brilliantly illuminated all night long except in



the depth of winter, when it is closed. How curious only two centres of light in Moscow: Lenin's tomb and the garden of a luxurious restaurant. "So this is Socialism," I can imagine the cynic saying.

The still more famous Yar, formerly one of the biggest restaurants in all Europe, where illiterate merchants used to spend fortunes on mad gypsy entertainments and not turn a hair when the bill was presented, is now a garage for motor cycles. But a little Yar has been opened, a not too splendid imitation. And everywhere there are restaurant-cabarets.

One night soon after my arrival I peeped into several of these, but finding so few people inside went out again. At last I made up my mind that the night life of Moscow's streets was a gloomy affair, and the next restaurant I came across I entered to remain a while. And here is a recital of my experiences.

It is the Restaurant Livornia. I glance at the menu, which is as follows:

## RESTAURANT LIVORNIA, MOSCOW.

### MENU.

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Crayfish soup . . . . .	4	6
Cabbage soup . . . . .	3	3
Salmon <i>à la</i> monastery . . . . .	5	6
Steak <i>à la</i> peasant . . . . .	2	3
Escalop african . . . . .	4	6
Mutton cutlet . . . . .	5	6
Woodcock . . . . .	7	0
Roast "baby" chicken . . . . .	7	0
Macaroni . . . . .	3	6
Cauliflower <i>à la</i> Polonaise . . . . .	5	6
Portion of cheese . . . . .	3	6
Portion of butter . . . . .	1	0
Glass of tea . . . . .	1	5
Glass of coffee . . . . .	1	6

Then I look at the wine list. A small bottle of champagne costs £5; of red or white wine, £2; a pint bottle of beer, 2*s.* 2*d.*

There are not more than half a dozen people in the place. Opposite to me is a youth who cannot be more than twenty years of age. He is quite drunk. On the table in front of him stands a half-empty liqueur glass. Other men present are of the "speculator" type; they lean across the tables and speak to one another in a whisper. The drunken man is singing raucously to himself. A little while later a woman enters. She has a coarse, swollen face and wears an astrachan coat, while the thick fingers of her red hands are covered with diamond rings.

A weedy-looking couple, dressed in faded fancy costume, come on to a little platform, and in a doleful voice sing a number of comic verses, which sail as near to the political wind as anyone can get in Russia and remain free. The laughter that greets them is restrained; everyone has a worried expression, and is distrustful of his neighbour. This is not surprising. When the Secret Police hear that a man is spending liberally on enjoyment, they follow him and "snap" him at a theatre, restaurant, or any place of entertainment in which he may be. Then he is arrested and confronted with the evidence of the camera. No wonder people sit in restaurants with anxious looks on their faces.

The atmosphere gets on my nerves; and the bill, when it is presented, completes my discomfiture.

I look in at a number of similar places. I am surprised to hear the performers indulging in a good deal of persiflage, even of a mild character, against the Government.

They ridicule the army of secretaries that one encounters in every Government Department, and even indulge in a few sly digs at the G.P.U.

The audiences are mostly comprised of merchants. No one is cheerful. Everyone is glum and eyes his neighbour with suspicion. Perhaps this neighbour is a spy—who knows? And conversations are carried on in hushed tones, with heads almost knocking together.

The Bolsheviks say of these cabarets that they are evil places, the last remnants of old bourgeois culture. For the workers beer-halls are provided, and they are usually crowded. A good deal of hard drinking goes on. One

evening I went to the restaurant of the Yaroslavl Station and found the whole staff of waiters so drunk as to be incapable of taking an order for a sandwich. And frequently at the breakfast hour I observed workmen consuming as many as a dozen bottles of beer.

One night I went to the opera. Moscow's Opera House is one of the biggest in Europe; it was packed from floor to ceiling. For the first time I saw the "new public" at its best, "the new bourgeoisie" composed of bureaucrats, clerks, and the products of the New Economic Policy ("Nep men" as they are called), small shopkeepers, merchants and speculators; all dressed as respectably as any middle-class crowd in the West; and hundreds of proletarians looking neat, clean and solemn. During the intervals little children tottered about and peeped at the orchestra. I liked the homeliness of the scene; it was much better so, I thought, than the display and pretentiousness of the old days.

Workers (or Communists, I should say) occupied all the best seats in the house; the spacious Imperial box from which the Emperor and his family used to view the performance was filled to overflowing (how strange to see sitting there young Communist girls wearing red handkerchiefs on their heads and eating sunflower seeds), while several of the boxes at either side of the stage were reserved for Commissars and their relatives—the new aristocracy.

My companion, a typical bourgeois of the old days, heaved a sigh, and remarked, in a whisper, "How the times have changed!"

The opera opened with a ball, first the polonaise, and then the mazurka. It was Pushkin's poem "Eugene Onegin"; a lyric of the past if ever there was one! It was curious to see a proletarian audience carried away by poetical pictures from the lives of the old nobility, and enraptured by the vision of charming costumes and graceful movements of a century ago. And Tchaikovsky's old-world music—how it visibly soothed them and set them dreaming!

I paid five roubles (a little more than 10s.) for a seat in

the ninth row of what in this country we call the stalls. But when I first went to the theatre all the seats were taken, and I was just about to leave when a young man approached me and asked in a whisper whether I needed a ticket, adding that if I did he had one for sale.

Several other men of similar type were suspiciously lounging about. I began to bargain. Fifteen roubles—twelve—five! The man handed me the ticket; then, glancing anxiously over his shoulder at a policeman, who, in turn, stared hard at us both, said "Follow me!" and thereupon made off, keeping close to the wall, after the manner of a cinema scoundrel.

He was one of the numerous "speculators" who purchase theatre tickets and retail them at the last moment; in Soviet Russia to be a speculator is to incur the risk of arrest and exile. I was full of fears, for I, too, had become a speculator—and that within twenty-four hours of my arrival in Russia. I lost my friend in the crowd, picked him up, and lost him a second time. After the first act I went in search of him again. We met in a dark corridor. He snatched the notes which I handed to him, and at once vanished . . . Altogether a very sinister experience.

As I left the Opera House, in the street outside a hawker ran after me dangling a pair of boots in my face. The price which he asked was the equivalent of £3 10s. Another offered me some towels or a pair of corsets; while another wanted to sell to me some knives and forks with silver handles at the price of a few pence each—stolen property, no doubt.

For some while I walked on. Occasionally I stumbled in the dark, putting my foot into one of the many holes with which the pavement was filled, until I suddenly caught sight of an electric sign which spelled the word "Casino."

Near the entrance there was a little space filled with piles of snow on which children were playing. A girl was lying in the snow, with a laughing expression on her face. Over her was standing a boy, gently belabouring her with a whip. "You speculator! Take that! And that!" he cried. Other boys were standing about and smoking cigarettes. These were some of the great army



of orphans of the Revolution, little waifs who had strayed hundreds of miles, fleeing from the area of awful famine, where white cannibals had made their appearance.

I went inside and turned into a little room on the right. Here, seated at a plain, rough table, four women, obviously of the proletarian class, were playing "Loti" for shilling stakes. The sight did not interest me for long. Soon I left and went up a wide staircase, at the top of which I was stopped and directed to a little apartment, where I formally registered myself as a public gambler. That done, I entered a big hall decorated with pink paintings of plump little cupids, where roulette and chemin-de-fer were being played. The atmosphere of suspicion which I had felt at the cabaret was repeated here. It was a sombre gathering of gamblers. All wore black tunic coats; I counted only one collar. Only two women were there. And in the eyes of everyone was the hunted, nervous expression with which I was now so familiar.

Soon the manager (conspicuous in a frock-coat) came up to me, smiling, and said:

"You're an Englishman; I see that the play is too small for you here. Let us go to another room; there you will be more interested."

I followed him to a small room where five or six intent-looking men, seated at a table, were playing for stakes of £10 a time, and so rapidly as to win or lose in a space of a few seconds. It would be possible here to drop a fortune of thousands of pounds in a twinkling.

I was amazed; I had not thought that there was so much money to burn in all Moscow. Later I spoke of my experience to a Russian acquaintance.

"If you've money, what's the use of it? You're not allowed to keep it, so why not gamble it away?" he said, and almost immediately added: "But it's a risky business; for many of the people in these places belong to the Secret Police."

And later a Bolshevik official explained the matter to me thus:

"Only speculators and 'bourjoui' go there. They can't give up their gambling habits all at once, so the State

obliges them with facilities for losing their money, and makes a *rèvenue* out of their little weaknesses. What's the harm in that? . . . And if anyone wins too much money we know all about it, and are on him at once."

It was almost daylight when I made my way back to the hotel. On the way I came across a crowd assembled around a carriage from which a woman had just alighted. Her boxes were strewn on the pavement. There was much excitement, and voices were raised on all sides. I gathered that the woman had just run away from her husband. When she left him she had not the least idea where to go. But she hired an *isvoschik* and told him to drive to "the centre." When she reached the *Tverskaya* she alighted, and to relieve her feelings began to address the passers-by, telling them all the intimate details of her troubles. I do not know what eventually happened. As I passed on she was still haranguing the crowd. But such incidents are not rare in Soviet Russia; the judgment of the pavement is often sought in regard to family differences.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### IN THE HOMES OF THE PEOPLE

It is when one goes into the homes of the people that one really sees how intimately the Revolution has affected their lives. No longer is it possible to distinguish a poor quarter from a rich quarter. Of course some districts wear a more dilapidated appearance than others. But this does not signify that they are inhabited by poor people. For all grades of society have been jumbled up together. Not only have workers and their families been put to live in the houses of the old aristocracy and middle classes, but many of the latter have been driven out of their homes into areas that were always squalid. The impression on the mind of a stranger is that the whole of Russia's town population is living a fantastic Bohemian existence. Nowhere is there any evidence of permanence. And how could it well be otherwise?

Confiscation was pretty ruthless. When the proletarians entered the houses of the bourgeoisie they helped themselves to what furniture took their fancy. And the Government agents also made frequent seizures; there was not much delicacy in those days. Nothing was too personal nor too sacred to be expropriated. And on top of all this "expropriation of the expropriators" came the frantic selling of things. Never in the history of the world, I imagine, was there such a great interchange of second-hand goods, of tables and chairs, of pianos and paintings, of cups and saucers and plates, of sheets and table-cloths, of safety razors and hairbrushes and of clothing of all kinds.

I was told that in the early period of the Revolution many people died from starvation because, so great was their attachment to property, that they refused to sell any of their belongings and so raise money wherewith to

purchase food. Corpses were frequently found in houses that were filled with furniture and other saleable articles which had somehow escaped the "expropriation of the expropriators."

But, as I have said, confiscation was drastic; those whom it did not reach were dispossessed by the hand of death or the stress of poverty, which forced them to sell furniture and other articles in exchange for morsels of food.

To-day, whenever one enters a house one gets the impression that a removal has just taken place, and that the new tenants have not had time to settle down. Often whole families are forced to live in small single apartments, which serve the purposes of bedrooms, living-rooms, kitchens, wash-houses, and in fact fulfil all the demands of human habitation. Usually such articles of furniture as it has been possible to retain bear no relation to the size or the character of the room, and many of them are broken and piled up in hopeless confusion, together with boxes and all the odds and ends of domestic life which look so contemptible when lying about in disorder. But in some rooms there is barely any furniture at all.

There are few detached dwellings in the big towns in Russia; the population is largely housed in blocks of flats. In every block, just as in every factory and every institution, there is what is known as a Communist fraction—or germ cell, as it is sometimes called—composed of Communists who have been lodged in confiscated rooms and who make use of confiscated furniture. The members of this fraction act as informers to the Secret Police; thus the State has witnesses in every man's home. To have good furniture (there is a heavy tax on furniture) or to be the owner of any valuable is to incur suspicion. Inspections of flats are of constant occurrence; any moment the door may open and a committee of five or six persons enter "just to have a look round."

One day I visited a lady whose apartment was tastefully arranged. Later when I paid her a second visit, I was surprised to find it almost empty.

"What has happened?" I asked.

"Oh! Nothing," she replied. "I thought it looked



too rich, so I've hidden everything away . . . behind the cupboard over there is the mirror which used to hang on that wall. And I've put away all the ornaments."

Another day when I went to see a man I found him quite seriously remonstrating with his wife for making the room "look too nice." A Committee of Inspection was expected.

The atmosphere of the slum is everywhere; and in the great cities the original slums still remain.

At the end of the winter I visited the worst of these areas in Moscow. In a yard piled up with snow were a number of big houses. There were no doors; one climbed up rickety iron stairways and entered into a long room straight from the pavement. Stuck to the walls high up were several holy ikons (pictures of Christ and the Virgin), portraits of Tolstoy, Lenin, and Gorky, and some anti-religious placards; while beneath ran a number of rough wooden platforms, upon which, stretched at full length, and dressed in rags, were a number of men and women of the type which Gorky wrote about.

A policeman entered and asked numerous details of myself and business. Then he explained that in the old days people were huddled together on the wooden platforms, but that now a space separated each one, thus allowing of a "bed" for every individual. This, he said proudly, had been accomplished by the Revolution.

The sole occupants of these communal slums were workers and professional beggars. The stench and filth were unbearable; in the square outside a disinfecting station had been established.

Among the occupants of one of the "dens" I discovered a little boy with a talent for painting; and he presented me with a portrait done by himself of Lenin, whose features were represented as very much alive, and whose bright blue tie with white spots harmonised well with a vivid revolutionary red background.

He said that he would like very much to go to school, but that he did not know how his wish could be fulfilled. No one helped him with advice.

I visited some small rooms each occupied by a family; the policeman explained to me that formerly each corner of the

room would be occupied by a family—four families in all; another achievement of the Revolution!

He was an intelligent man and said things would be better in the future. And then he inquired about conditions in England.

Later I went to see an old acquaintance whom I had known in pre-revolutionary days. My friend lived on the second floor of a block of flats, which would formerly have been described as handsome and commodious. The stairway was in complete darkness. As soon as I closed the door behind me I encountered an unpleasant smell—the smell of stale filth. I struck a match and groped my way upstairs. Then I fumbled for the bell which was not there and eventually knocked with my knuckles. After a little while I heard footsteps. Someone shouted: “Who’s that?”

I gave my name and added that of the person I wanted.

There was a long pause, at the end of which another individual demanded my name and business. More explanations followed. Then the door opened slowly and the suspicious-looking face of my friend showed itself.

Afterwards he said to me: “You must always ring three times; that’s our signal.”

The room into which I was conducted by my friend was tiny; it was partitioned off on all sides, and had formerly been part of a much larger apartment. Into it had been squeezed a couple of beds and some massive furniture which had obviously been designed for a big room.

In one corner was a crude stove made of brick covered with fresh clay, the thick piping of which was the most prominent object in the room. In all the rooms of Moscow improvised little stoves of this kind have been installed; they are called “bourgeouika” (a lady of the bourgeois class).

Some half-dozen guests were present. We all sat round a little table and drank glasses of tea. Everyone was anxious to learn something about Western Europe. Russians know less of conditions there than we do of life in Russia. No one trusts the news in the Bolshevik Press.

After a little while one woman remarked: "Two women were sent away from the State office where I work. And for what, do you think? Simply because they looked aristocratic. We were all lined up and inspected by Communists and they were picked out for dismissal because they had refined faces." . . .

And then she turned to me and said: "Yes, everything is upside down in Russia. How lucky if one can only discover that one had among one's ancestors a worker or a peasant."

"Hush—speak in a lower voice . . . there are Communists next door," interrupted the hostess, pointing to the thin partition that served as a wall. And she continued in a whisper: "A strange woman lives there. There are always lots of people with her; and noise and piano-playing go on from morning until all hours of the night. She has a baby which never gets any rest, and cries and cries and cries. And she says quite seriously that she deliberately encourages people to come to the house all the time because she doesn't believe in the baby being alone—it's against her collectivist principles."

Everyone spoke in a low voice.

"It's all nonsense," said one man, a professor in the Moscow University. "There's no mysticism in the Russian peasant. The Revolution has proved that. All common people are the same the world over. The idea of Dostoevsky that the Russian peasant had a superior soul and would save the world is rubbish—pure rubbish."

"I don't agree," replied the hostess. "During the war I nursed hundreds of wounded soldiers. When a German was dying, he thanked me personally for all I had done for him, but when a Russian died he thanked me in the name of God. . . . I want to go to England to see how an Englishman dies. I've never seen an Englishman die."

Here a discussion on going abroad began. Everyone present confessed to a longing to visit Europe again. They spoke of Europe as if it were remote, as we speak of Africa or Australia. But no one expressed any desire to leave Russia permanently.

"It is rotten, but it is Russia. We want to see the end

of it, to live through it. Something good will come out one day. We don't know what this something will be. We don't understand what is going on now. They are strange people to us, these Communists. It is very horrible but we don't wish to run away from it. After all—it is Russia." All spoke in this manner.

We heard a commotion in the street.

"Comsomols!" said my hostess. Comsomols, as I have already explained, are young Communists. A detachment was marching past to the tune of a strident chorus:

Forward to meet the dawn,  
Comrades in struggle:  
Forward with bayonets and  
Bombs to blast a free path.  
We are the young guards of the  
Peasants and workers.  
We lift our banners to  
Make labour master of the world.

We separated like a company of cinema conspirators, wishing each other good-night in a whisper.

"Don't telephone to me and don't write," said my friend. "I'll come to you one evening this week at your hotel. I'll come straight to your room unannounced. . . . I don't want to be seen. I've been in prison once." Those present laughed.

Next evening I went to see another old friend. He was a representative type of the Russian intelligentsia, a man belonging to one of the best Petersburg families, who had passed all his life actively assisting the revolutionary movement. He had, in fact, been what is known in Russia as a professional revolutionary, and had spent many years in the prisons of Siberia. I found him occupying a small apartment in a quarter which in former times was the exclusive resort of the aristocracy. He had aged; though still in middle life, he was an old man in appearance.

The furniture in the room consisted of a couple of iron bedsteads—broken down, rusty and covered with filthy brown blankets—a pair of shabby chairs and a shaky wooden table on which torn newspapers had been laid. The ceiling



was stained and the plaster had fallen off where the water had once poured in, and the parquet floor was black from neglect. A string of washing was suspended across the room. Some picture post cards were stuck upon the wall above one of the beds; nailed in a corner were soiled portraits of Ibsen, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Goethe, Carlyle and Ruskin. "There was a time," said my friend, "when I thought that all the things they wrote about would come true. I thought they would come true when the Revolution broke out. . . . Well, well!—there they are—crucified on the walls. I sat in the Fortress for four years . . . and all because I used to idealise the peasant and the workman in those days," he went on, "but now——" He spat on the floor.

"And what do you do for a living?" I asked.

He smiled. "I'm a little Soviet official."

So this was the end of all his dreams!

Later he said with a sigh, "I'm neither a candle for God nor a poker for the devil."

Then he explained to me that he had lost his wife from typhus during the Revolution, and that his son and daughter had been maintained in a Communist camp. "Now," he continued, "the one is seventeen years of age and the other eighteen. Yes, and we all live together in this little room."

The daughter came in—a tall, well-built girl in a faded velvet skirt and white blouse. She sat upon the bed and began to sew.

"Yes," continued my friend, "life is very grey in Russia. It always was grey—but now——"

"Oh, do shut up, father!" interrupted the girl. "Don't talk in that dreary way."

After a while there was a knock at the door. A man who was an intimate friend of the family entered and began to talk excitedly. Things were getting worse, he declared. So-and-so and So-and-so had been arrested. Everyone was being arrested. . . . But they could not go on long. The Grand Duke Nicholas had got an army ready.

A typical Moscow conversation. Moscow lives on rumours.

Soon the girl rose and asked her father for some money ; she wanted to go to the theatre. He handed her a note, and at once she went out, banging the door behind her.

" 'There won't be peace in Russia,' remarked the friend of my friend, "until every commissar is in a cage and exhibited before the public."

After that he got up to go. His appearance was pitiable. His clothes were torn and greasy, and over these he put on a rough sheepskin coat. But his small eyes twinkled, and his expression was far from that of a "down and out" man.

"You see me," he said, turning in my direction. "Don't you think I look queer? Well, I'm disguised as a Comrade. That way it's more easy to remain in this world and much more difficult to get into the next. I'm rich, but everyone thinks I'm a proletarian. It's all a matter of arithmetic with me. Good luck comes by radio to me from Jehovah, with a visa from Karl Marx. I've everything I need. I don't work : only fools work."

And then he turned to my friend and added :

"Ah ! Ivan Ivanovitch, my good comrade, you've been thinking all your life of the sweetness of collectivism and other isms. But you've sick eyes. I'm a seeing man. Yes, all your life you've been thinking about your neighbour. I don't bother about my neighbour, and look at me—I'm quite healthy and happy. Now, why isn't it the reverse? I'll tell you why. I don't strain myself as you do. Why, I'd sooner be in a hell full of sinners than be saved with a fig-leaf in Paradise !"

Another old friend whom I visited lived with his wife and grown-up daughter and son in one small apartment. "And we're lucky!" he said. "People can't find rooms anywhere ; and some pay as much as three hundred chervoutze (£300) to get into a hole like this. And then you may be turned out at any moment."

"You must have had a lively time," I said after a pause.

"Lively!" he exclaimed. "Grey . . . terribly grey!"

The bell rang twice. My friend moved quickly to the door and opened it, and there entered a young woman muffled up in a thick coat whitened with snow.

"My daughter!" said my friend.

I started. I had known her when she was a child. She stopped suddenly in front of me and took off her hat. Her hair was white—quite white, her features were pale and sickly-looking. Her face was lined and the expression on it was rather bitter.

"What news?" asked her father.

"News! . . . The director has been arrested; no one knows why. He was such a nice, inoffensive man. There've been hundreds of arrests." As she spoke she turned to me.

"Arrests—what for?" I asked.

She shrugged her shoulders. "Who knows?" she answered. "You never can tell what will happen. You come home and you find the agent of the G.P.U. ransacking your flat. You are arrested and put in prison for months. Someone has denounced you. This denouncing is always going on. Yes, Russians have sunk very low. We used to talk about metaphysics and argue on all sorts of questions for hours at a time. But now it's just a bitter struggle for existence from morning until night. No one thinks of anything else but how to get money. The Russian soul that we all used to boast about was dead long ago. Perhaps it never existed. . . . Of course, what has happened had to happen. It couldn't be helped. We can't go back to the old life and we don't want to go back to it. Something good will come. . . . Perhaps not in our time . . . but it will come. We were all guilty. We all deserved to suffer, but we've not suffered for nothing. . . . Ah, those *émigrés*! They don't know Russia; they do not belong to us any longer. Why do they persist with their foolish little plots? Every time something is discovered abroad reprisals are taken here. Hundreds are arrested. . . ."

She was out of breath and, beginning to cough violently, went out of the room for a moment. While she was absent her father explained to me that she had got some work at a museum. Her salary was 10s. a week and she could consider herself well-off. He was anxious about her—there was something wrong with her chest. Everyone in Russia was suffering from a bad chest, bad nerves, or bad something or other. They weren't a normal people.

"And you—what do you do?" I asked.

"Oh, I—it's a long story. I opened a little kiosk for selling buttons, needles, and odds and ends, but they taxed me more than the whole of my stock was worth, so I had to give it up. Afterwards, I tried to find a job in a State shop, but as I didn't belong to the Party, I had to get references from two Communists, and I didn't know any. So I've been without work for a long while. And there are thousands—hundreds of thousands like me."

"But how do you live?"

He laughed and said:

"We sell some little thing every day."

"And when there's nothing left to sell?"

"Who thinks of to-morrow in Russia? We live for the moment—that is sufficient," he answered.

The daughter returned. I asked her about her work.

"It's interesting so long as it will last. But every week the number of employés is reduced. Always Communists are put to watch over you; you can't get away from them. It gets on your nerves. You don't know who is a spy and who isn't. And always they're digging into your past. Endless suspicions, questionings, forms to fill in. Only to-day I got this."

She put in front of me a printed form. It is too long to reproduce here; but the following are but a few of the questions set forth:

Nationality.

Social and family position (give full details).

Age, name and occupation.

Parents.

Are you married? Number of children.

Financial position of yourself and parents.

Do you possess any capital? If so, what amount, and where is it?

How were you educated?

If a military education, give particulars.

Set forth nature of employment which gave you a means of subsistence (*a*) till the First Revolution; (*b*) till the Bolshevik Revolution; (*c*) from the Bolshevik Revolution till now.



If in the army, how long did you serve ?

Have you been in any battles ?

Were you in the Red Army, Tsar's Army, or Counter-revolutionary Army ?

If you were in civil employment, state the nature of it and the position you held since the Tsar's *régime*.

Do you belong to any political party ? If so, what party ? State the political party or parties to which you have belonged since the Tsar's *régime*.

Why did you leave your last employment ?

Do you belong to a trade union ?

Have you suffered any repressions for political activity ?

Have you ever been on trial for any offence ? If so, say where, and set forth decision of court.

"That's nothing," remarked my friend. "Every week you've got to fill up a new form: the whole population has been card-indexed a thousand times or more. It's all done to dig up your origin; if you're not a Communist or proletarian, you get it hot. I tell you they take a devilish delight in hunting a bourgeois. And if only they find out you've got a bit of money—— Of course everyone lies, and if they've anything left worth having they hide it."

In Leningrad I sought out an acquaintance, an ex-Colonel of the Imperial *régime*. I was surprised to find that he was still living at his old address. He occupied a large flat in what had formerly been one of the best quarters of the city. As soon as he opened the door to me he put his fingers to his lips, and pointing to the dining-room, whispered, "Communists !"

And then walking on tiptoe along a corridor he led me to a little bedroom, where he lived with his wife and a kitten named "Karloska," after Karl Marx. Time and the Revolution had made no changes in his personal appearance, he was nearly seventy years of age, but so well preserved that one could have taken him for a man of middle age. His wife, strange to say, had grown fat. And her speech had become a little incoherent. She kept on repeating that in summer-time "fourteen Primus stoves were all roaring together in the kitchen." This fact seemed to trouble her more than any other discomfort of the Revolution.

“Communism!” remarked her husband.

Afterwards I went to see a famous composer who had been left undisturbed in his flat by order of Kamenev for no other reason than that he was a famous composer. I also visited an artist who, together with his wife and two children, lived in a small room in a block of flats, which had once been occupied by well-to-do people. The whole building was in a state of indescribable filth; the sanitary arrangements were of the most primitive kind; and the stench was sickening. One of the lower floors had been converted into a place of residence for working-class students of both sexes who were attending the University. The Bolsheviks believe in co-education. But too often the consequence is cohabitation, liberty, equality, and maternity.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### LIFE IN LENINGRAD

At one time it was feared that trains would cease running altogether in Russia; to-day the whole system is in working order. To satisfy the revolutionary conscience, theoretically there is only one class, with the quaint sub-divisions of hard and soft seats. But on long-distance trains excellent sleeping and restaurant cars are provided; these are usually patronised by commissars and merchants—"Nep" men. Only by the payment of bribes can tickets be procured for such trains.

The railways are nearly capable of dealing with a traffic of pre-war dimensions, but the present traffic is only about 40 per cent. of that amount. Hundreds of locomotives and thousands of cars are laid up; long lines of derelict trucks smashed up in the revolution are a common sight at many stations.

It is night. The train is leaving Moscow for Leningrad. I take my allotted place in the sleeping-car, the "International," as it used to be called in the old days. The compartment is clean, well-lighted, warm, and comfortable. My companions are two Jews dressed neatly in black. A young woman enters and holds out her hand for alms.

"I'm a school teacher," she whines. "I've had no work for a year, and my husband is ill. Please—a few kopecks."

"But I thought school teachers were in great demand in Soviet Russia," I said. She smiles.

Then some young men come, selling badges of Lenin. The Jews purchase one each, and at once put them in the lapels of their coats. When change is offered to them in return for the sum tendered, they decline it in an off-hand manner.

"Bolsheviks!" I think to myself.

As soon as the train has left the station one of the Jews throws the Lenin badge under the seat, while the other tosses his out of the window.

Afterwards they unwrap some parcels of delicious pastries, a share of which they offer to me.

Then we begin a conversation.

"You're an Englishman?"

"Yes."

"What do you think of Soviet Russia?"

I, too, have acquired the Russian manner—and so I make a vague reply.

After a while we become more sociable.

"It's a nightmare," one of the Jews confides in a whisper. "I had a shop in Petrograd—Leningrad," he adds quickly, with a laugh, "and I had to give it up. Taxes were terrible. No one can live. I was arrested and put in prison for a year. And my wife was afterwards arrested and put there too, because she wouldn't give me away. But now I don't live any more in Petrograd. I was a rich man once, and they know me too well there. If I were to go back they'd have me again. I live outside Moscow, a retired life, so to say, and go home occasionally to see how my wife and family are getting on. I creep into my house at dark, and no one sees me."

The other Jew tells me that he does likewise.

"What did they charge you with?" I ask.

"Nothing; just being speculators," replies the first Jew.

"What's a speculator?"

"Anyone the authorities want to put their hands on."

The conductor enters, and the Jew hands him two 3-rouble notes.

"In our position," he remarks afterwards to me, "you've got to keep on the right side of everyone. It's bribery, bribery, bribery all the time."

The contrast between Moscow and Petrograd, now named Leningrad, was always marked—Moscow with its air of "the big village," so typical of Russian disorderliness; Leningrad, an Imperial capital, with broad streets and Western aspect.

But to-day the contrast between the two cities is still more striking; for it is the contrast between life and death itself.



Leningrad is a dying city. Never did I feel so depressed as during my stay there.

I knew Leningrad well in its prosperous days. Life was never too happy in Russia. But it was always possible to extract some delight from the mere contemplation of Leningrad's stylish beauty. No city in the world contains more eighteenth or early nineteenth century architecture, nor can show more romantic gardens of the same epoch wherein are graceful pavilions set on columns. How well its slender golden spires and Byzantine domes fit into this lyric setting. And then there is the Neva—a river of magnificent decorative qualities, and the broadest and handsomest on which a capital ever stood! And the canals!

To-day Leningrad reminds one of a beautiful woman suffering from neglect. It is still beautiful, very beautiful; but so inexpressibly sad. As one approaches the city in the train one sees lines of deserted factories with smokeless chimneys.

The Neva, which at this time of the year was always so animated, is now almost deserted; a few broken and water-logged barges are moored at its wharves; the palaces on its quays are empty and in decay; a sunken steamer lies in the fairway; at night no rows of twinkling lights; the darkness over the scene is almost unrelieved, and as one walks along the embankments one sees only silhouettes.

Elsewhere are many deserted dwellings, and hundreds of buildings are in ruins; in some parts of the city one might imagine that an earthquake had taken place; skeletons of houses and heaps of *débris* everywhere. The centre of the city suffered little, and already has returned to something like a normal aspect; that is to say, most of the shops are open, and their windows are filled with the customary array of articles displayed in a European city.

But even here rows of shops may still be seen closed and shuttered-in; in the Morskaya, for example, which was noted for its jewellers' shops, and which was Leningrad's smartest shopping street. Many banks and houses are also empty and deserted.

At the Nevsky end of the Morskaya the same policeman stands on point duty who was there in the Emperor's day

—the policeman with the side whiskers who was one of Petrograd's characters. How strange that he should have survived when so many of his kind have vanished !

Grass may be seen growing, not only in the streets of the outlying districts, but also in some of those in the centre. The square of the Kazan Cathedral, adjacent to the Nevsky, looks quite green ; it might well be the square of some ancient cathedral town. At one time botanists discovered in the heart of the city plant life such as is only found growing in wild countries.

The traffic has diminished and the streets are silent. In the old days one had to walk warily when crossing the Nevsky and other main streets ; the traffic was not thick, it is true, but it was swift-moving, and the danger of being run over by some smart equipage drawn by high-stepping horses was considerable.

To-day one may stroll at leisure across the Nevsky, and the " traffic," like the crowd in the streets, looks worn out. The roads in Moscow are bad, but in Leningrad they are far worse—full of great cavities. In the black days of the Revolution the wooden blocks were pulled up and plundered for firewood.

In many open spaces outside museums and other public buildings immense piles of logs are stored in readiness for winter. One would not be surprised at such a homely sight in a small village, perhaps—but how strange in Leningrad !

In the daytime the streets in the centre are animated enough ; the Nevsky, for example, is almost as crowded as it used to be. But it is a different crowd ; no military uniforms, and few elegantly dressed women. The proletariat, as Dostoevsky prophesied, is on the streets : arm in arm, they parade up and down—sometimes six or seven in a row. They jostle one another, talk and laugh loudly, and sing revolutionary songs.

The women have abandoned the peasant shawl and taken to cheap hats. High heels are in fashion, and painted faces more common than in former days. In summer time the crowd is everywhere ; all open spaces are filled ; people sit on the steps of the cathedrals, and perch themselves on the ledges of shop windows in the principal streets ; and when they

go they leave behind on the pavements a litter of husks from the sunflower seeds which they have just munched.

No longer is the city divided into fashionable quarters and working-class quarters, for proletarians are distributed everywhere. I went with a dispossessed bourgeois companion to view his old house in the once aristocratic street of Kamenostrovsky; on the pavement outside children were playing and screaming, while on the steps at the entrance their parents sat and talked; from the windows above gossiping heads protruded and red flags were suspended. In the rooms behind one could see washing hanging up.

Yes, the Russian democracy has arrived; it may be hard to distinguish the new proletarian from the old, but everywhere one sees and feels that the masses have found themselves. . . . In the old days these masses were subdued, and in the background; when one alluded to the "public" one meant the aristocracy and the middle classes. But to-day things are reversed, and the proletarians are "lords and masters" of the situation. Of course, old-fashioned people—by old-fashioned I mean the people of yesterday—do not like this change. They walk on the road to avoid rubbing shoulders with the mob, and remark with an air of disgust: "What a vulgar public is ours!"

Yet there are streets in Leningrad, and not far from the centre, too, so still and peaceful as to remind one of country lanes. . . . And the canals which run through the heart of the city and give it an almost Venetian atmosphere, are quite deserted. At night one feels sad and strange (and a little nervous) wandering through streets that once were full of life but now are dark and empty.

Leningrad always looked its best in winter, and the same is true to-day. The snow hides dilapidation and filth, and stills the noises of the street. Its influence upon everything is softening and purifying. Yet the contrast with Leningrad of old days is more striking at this season than at any other, so I think. In Tsarist days Leningrad was brisk and alive. Now it is listless and sad. But somehow its new mood takes a curious hold upon the stranger. One feels that Europe has receded and is far away; that all the familiar perplexities of

life no longer matter. This dreamy sense of remoteness is sometimes very pleasant to a visitor. Upon Russians it makes a quite different impression. Many of them told me that during winter more than during any other period of the year they felt that Leningrad was a big prison; then everything was so silent and so sinister!

In Leningrad, as in all Russian towns, the streets have been renamed; the Nevsky has become the October Twenty-fifth Prospekt! (the date of the Bolshevik Revolution); other streets are named after famous revolutionaries; one street, for example, in memory of the man who assassinated Alexander II; a second after Rosa Luxembourg; and a third after Robespierre.

Then there is a "Street of Young Proletarians," a "Place of Communards," a "Square of Red Commanders," a "Street of Brotherly Love," and a "Bridge of Freedom." If one went only by the names of many of the streets one might well imagine that one was strolling in the highways of Paradise itself.

Some streets are named after well-known writers and composers, Turgeniev, Tchekov, and Tchaikovsky amongst others; and there is a Röntgen Street in memory of the X-ray inventor.

Contrary to my expectation, I found most of the old monuments in their accustomed places; the Bolsheviks must be credited with a desire to preserve everything that is of approved artistic value. Beneath the colossal equestrian statue of Alexander III outside the Nicholas Railway Station (the merits of which have always been the subject of bitter controversy), they have put, in bold letters, the following insolent inscription:—

"Scarecrow! My son and father were executed during my lifetime, and I reaped the fate of no glory after death. I am stuck out here as an iron scarecrow before the country which overthrows for ever the slavery of Tsardom."

Monuments are expensive luxuries. Few new ones have been erected, and these, for economy's sake, are made of wood, and therefore are but short-lived. Such a figure of Plekhanov, the Russian Socialist (hatless and wearing a



frock-coat) has recently been erected in the grounds in front of Kazan Cathedral, where it keeps strange company with the more solid and heroic-looking monuments of Prince Kutuzov-Smolenski and Prince Barclay de Tolly, famous Generals of 1812.

From the steps of the Cathedral (which is modelled on the lines of St. Peter's in Rome) Plekhanov delivered revolutionary speeches. Elsewhere busts of Marx and Voltaire have been erected: busts and tablets generally are favoured in Revolutionary Russia because they are cheaper to construct than formal monuments.

Many of the palaces, which prior to the Revolution were occupied by great families—as, for example, those of Sheremetiev, Bobrinsky, Yousoupov (where Rasputin was murdered)—have been thrown open to the public. Most of the rooms have been left as they were found when their owners fled before the mob; the contents have not been in the least disturbed.

In the Sheremetiev Palace, which dates back to the times of Elizabeth and Catherine, there was a little chapel, and close to the altar a little room to which access was gained by a passage. The first of the line had married a simple and timid peasant girl (so it was explained to me), and the room had been built for her so that she could worship apart; the passage, too, had been specially constructed in order to enable her to reach the room unobserved. A romance of nobleman and peasant—how strange in these days of worker and peasant!

The curator of the palace received a weekly wage of only eleven shillings . . . the yard outside had been let as a store-place for firewood.

One sees in these forsaken palaces things so sacred as locks of hair (preserved beneath glass), portraits of relatives taken just after death, or intimate portraits of living people.

Such portraits are frequently arranged on the wall behind a bed; and on a dressing-table close by may be seen hair-brushes and combs, hand-mirrors, and perhaps a half-filled bottle of scent. In one room I saw some faded dressing-gowns still hanging from hooks and some old slippers beneath a table.

In an adjacent nursery lay three broken dolls. Soiled blotting pads, pens dipped in inkpots, and open books stood on library tables. On the walls of the more ceremonial rooms—"the red room," "the blue room," "the green room"—old masters and family portraits were hung—from the beginning of the family down to the present generation, "now abroad," as the caretaker announced.

When I visited these palaces it was winter; none of them had been heated since the Revolution, and the cold was much more severe inside than outside: it was the coldness of a cellar. The caretakers were muffled up to their eyes.

Few visitors frequent these abandoned palaces, and the silence and stillness within are depressing, the more so because everything reminds one so poignantly of the life of yesterday. It is as though one had entered a room from which a corpse had just been taken.

From the Winter Palace, which faces the Neva on one side and an immense square on the other, the Red Flag of the Revolution is always flying. Like most other buildings in Leningrad this impressive palace has a shabby aspect. Its red walls are pitted in places with bullet holes and chipped from shell hits; they are, moreover, sadly in need of a fresh coat of paint.

On the ground floor, in a salon with white marble columns and massive chandeliers, where Catherine II once received her guests, a revolutionary museum has been arranged. Relics of Lenin (including his old passport made out in a false name) and of various revolutionary episodes in the world's history, are exhibited. . . . Only two sets of apartments are shown, those of Alexander II and of the late Imperial Family.

On the opposite side of the Neva stands the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. A palace and a prison face to face, how characteristic of Russia! Many famous revolutionaries were imprisoned in the fortress, including Kropotkin, in the days when Tsars looked across the river out of the windows of the Winter Palace. Later Kerensky turned out the Emperor and occupied the palace himself, and his enemies took the place of the Tsar's enemies in the dungeons of the fortress. And then came the Bolsheviki. They did not occupy the palace,

it is true, but they took possession of the most modern hotel in the town, the Astoria, and for a long while all their prisoners were locked up in the fortress, and many were put to death there. Later they opened the doors of the fortress, but made a prison of the whole of Russia.

At present the fortress on the Neva is one of the show places of Leningrad. Its iron doors have been flung open and for the first time in its long history fresh air is passing through its catacombs, and penetrating into its dark, insanitary corners. It is now a museum of ghosts and a graveyard of bones. The Bolsheviks have other prisons where they carry on their business unobtrusively. The fortress of Peter and Paul is too famous, too historic to be used as a State prison any longer; it is now regarded as the holy ground of martyrs.

Trotsky, it seems, spent a fortnight in the fortress during Tsarist days. I was one of a party to whom this fact was proudly mentioned by a Bolshevik guide. We stood in one of the arched cells in a darkness almost as black as night itself.

"Hum," grunted a man near to me, "they were revolutionaries then, and they are ruling now. But they got their reward. . . . It seems that there is a reward in this world, after all. If we had sat there for a little while perhaps we should all be ruling now. . . . I wonder how much it would cost to rent one of these cells for a house?"

Everyone looked in the direction from whence the daring voice came. But no one uttered a word. The thought was uppermost in all minds that perhaps a *provocateur* had spoken.

On one of the doors I observed these words scribbled in pencil: "The Tsar will soon come back."

There were many workers in the party of sightseers, and I noticed that they listened with rapt attention to the guide's vivid recital of the sufferings inflicted upon the revolutionary martyrs of the Imperialist *régime*. One could imagine their feelings as they tramped freely through the fortress, and pictured in their minds the sufferings of "the friends of the people." In the precincts of the fortress is the Westminster Abbey of Russia, the Cathedral which contains the tombs of the Emperors. When the Judgment Trumpet sounds,

Kings and Revolutionaries will rise from this place—Rulers all! But meanwhile the Bolsheviks (contrary to rumour) have not disturbed royal tombs, though all the silver wreaths which so sumptuously adorned the surrounding walls have been taken away and melted down. The Soviet hunger for precious metal is insatiable.

A few days later I witnessed the immense May Day procession passing through the square beneath the palace windows. It was in this square that the massacre of 1905 took place, when the Emperor's soldiers fired on the crowd led by the priest Gapon.

From a specially constructed stand, draped in red, Zinoviev, the "Governor" of Leningrad, and a privileged assembly of Soviet officials and their friends, watched the spectacle. A man in tawdry golden vestments, and with ridiculously long hair and absurdly shaggy beard, made up as a Russian priest, was standing in a cart, the horses of which were driven by a young Communist woman, whose head was wrapped in a red shawl. He was swinging a censer and crying out, "Christ is risen!" (Easter had just passed.) An expression of mock piety was on his face.

"There," he said, pointing to the palace, "lived Nicholas II who promised you Heaven in the next world." And then he got down from the cart and began to dance, in the muddy street, with some Communist girls while a band composed of Red soldiers struck up a lively tune. Later several soldiers came and knelt before him, and he made a mock sign of the cross over them.

Walking leisurely in another part of the procession was a grotesque figure with rouged face, dressed in red to represent a Cardinal, and on either side capered a soldier in Fascist uniform of red and gold. The Cardinal sprinkled the assembled spectators with water, and was greeted with roars and shrieks.

And the crowd was amused.

During the French Revolution a prostitute, escorted by "wind-music, red ringlet caps and the madness of the world," was borne shoulder-high to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and worshipped as the goddess of reason. She lived to be ninety



years old, but went blind and became an imbecile and a street beggar.

As the May Day procession moved through the square it passed beneath the Alexander column, one of the highest monuments in the world, on which stands the bronze figure of an angel trampling on a snake, and holding a large sword in one hand while pointing to Heaven with the other.

The proceedings came to an end in the wide green space known as the Field of Mars, where, in the days of the Emperors military parades were held; here the assembly of Communists reverently paid tribute to the graves of their dead comrades contained within an enclosure of granite blocks which had been removed from the wall of the garden in front of the Winter Palace.

No monuments marked these graves; the names of those buried in them were inscribed on plain red tablets of wood; but from the surrounding granite blocks ten red flags fluttered. Deserted palaces and barracks, the architecture of which was of characteristic Petersburg style, filled in the background.

In Moscow the theatres and cinemas are filled to overflowing; in Leningrad there are always vacant seats in places of amusement.

One night I went to the opera in the famous Marinsky Theatre. I walked along the Moika Canal, where I hardly met a soul, and where grass was sprouting up beneath the cobble-stones. At Moscow I heard Tchaikovsky's opera "Eugene Onegin"; at Leningrad the opera was "Pikovaya Dama," and the scenes were laid in old St. Petersburg.

The audience resembled that of Moscow: the new bourgeoisie, with a large sprinkling of workers who were admitted free or at half-price to the best seats in the house, including the Imperial box. My companion was a well-known singer. The performance got on his nerves.

"Like all art in Russia," he said, "the opera has gone down. . . . The singers have to sing too much nowadays,

and they get miserable pay. . . . The Bolshevik State is a hard master ; and besides, it's got no money."

It was true that there was no life in the performance, but the audience applauded loudly, whereupon my artist friend remarked : " They don't understand the music ; they don't understand anything at all—our new public."

" Then what are they applauding ? " I asked.

" The picture, not the music."

The picture was certainly beautiful. But everything about it had a mocking sadness, all the chivalry, grace, hypocrisy, vice and drama of the remote past resurrected (so it seemed) to remind the audience of the recent past. The music, too, was sad. And the faded and half-empty appearance of the theatre, the hungry, discontented singers, all the people in the audience, those who sighed as well as those who applauded—all were sad !

I felt miserable. . . . There was nothing to be done but to go back to my hotel. I was staying at the famous Europe Hotel, which at one time was one of the most luxurious in the world. To-day it is still the best hotel in Russia . . . Not a soul was to be seen in the hall.

Attracted by the strains of the orchestra I went upstairs to the dining-room. Two people were seated there ; the side cabinets, which in former times hid revelling parties from the public gaze, were quite empty.

To the audience of two the orchestra was playing with characteristic Russian temperament ; one might almost have imagined that the fiddlers had gone on fiddling since 1917. . . . The scene was not unusual.

Leningrad has become a provincial town, and the Europe Hotel a provincial hotel. Yet everything is there that used to be there : the handsome coiffeur's shop, the long tea lounge, with its marble walls, the great stairway with its imitation of palace magnificence ; but most of the living rooms are locked and empty ; for the guests have gone, and only ghosts remain. . . .

As I have said elsewhere, the owners of the hotel are the secret police ; and all its porters and waiters are their agents—some of them are men of superior education. If anyone asked me where I was staying, I always replied : " At the most comfortable police station in the city."

It would be interesting to learn how many people have been arrested in the Europe Hotel; one night a man occupying a room next to mine was shot by the police.

Of ordinary night life there is none in Leningrad; all the famous restaurants have been closed; and if one feels inclined for a little vicious distraction, the only places to frequent are two casinos which have been established by the Communist State, palatial buildings which were formerly used as clubs by the bourgeoisie.

A little while ago there was a third gambling den in the roof garden of the hotel, the idea being, I suppose, to relieve rich foreigners of their money. But few rich foreigners came to Russia. . . .

After wandering about the deserted hall for a while, I ran across the only other foreign guest—an American business man—and together we decided to visit a casino. As we entered we wrote our names and addresses in the register of public gamblers and received an official ticket of admission.

Play was going on in several rooms, *chemin-de-fer*, *baccarat*, and *roulette*. Stakes were small; the highest amount risked was a *chervonetz* (25s.), and that was of rare occurrence.

An adjacent room, got up to resemble a grotto, was a dining-room; here an orchestra rendered with much feeling characteristic Russian airs, tender and melancholy. The people seated at the tables ate sparingly; two men ordered vodka, which the waiter brought without the least attempt at concealment. The sale of vodka was at that time prohibited in Russia.

Those present, I gathered, were mostly small merchants and officials; there was not a single face among them that did not wear a preoccupied or worried expression. Rarely have I seen a more gloomy assembly.

In the gambling rooms, which were open all night, seriousness was still more noticeable. My American friend refused to remain any longer. "I can't stick it," he said. "It's too miserable. I don't like to see unhappy people enjoying themselves."

I was told in Leningrad that the secret police are interested in the casinos there; of course, they must live, like everyone

else. It is a remunerative business for them ; and besides, what better method could be devised for running rich men to earth ?

We returned to our hotel before it was daylight. Many of the shop windows were lighted up—not for the sake of advertisement, but as a protection against thieves. And outside nearly every shop sat a watchman, muffled in sheepskins, armed with rifle and bayonet. In Moscow, and in all Russian cities, the same extraordinary precautions are taken ; lawlessness still persists.

Flats are frequently raided and robbed by armed men. Rarely a door is opened without the question “ Who’s there ? ” or in response to a preconcerted signal, as, for example, the ringing of the bell a certain number of times.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### A VISIT TO AN OLD ARISTOCRAT

I VISITED an old acquaintance in Russia, one of the fallen aristocracy. He had formerly occupied one of the highest official positions in the State; he still held an official position, but one not quite so exalted. He was a scientist of some repute, and when the Revolution came had been given an appointment as President of a Bolshevik scientific institution at a weekly salary of 15s.

But over him had been placed a young Communist who was a veterinary student. On the anniversary of Lenin's death, this Communist came to him and said: "You must assemble the staff together, and make a little appropriate speech to them." Refusal was out of the question. These are the words which my friend spoke:

"Comrades! Lenin was a man of tremendous conviction and will power; all his life he suffered for his faith. And on that account we reverence him. As for his politics, others more competent will speak to you of those."

My acquaintance, together with his wife and son and two child nieces, lived in a fairly large suite of apartments. He was wearing a greasy, tattered dressing-gown when I called, and received me in what, in the old days, would be described as the salon. A picture more dismal it would be hard to imagine. There was little furniture in the room, and what there was was old and rickety. The parquet floor had not been polished for years and was black from neglect. The wall paper, once rose-pink, was stained and filthy. The windows looked out on a deserted, snow-bound street which had formerly been one of the most animated thoroughfares in the city. And on the wall opposite were hung two large portraits, one of the official wearing uniform and decorations, the other of his wife in Court dress. These portraits were

all that was left of the family possessions. The room was large, and on that account could not be heated properly. . . . Wood was dear. . . . And so I kept on my overcoat.

Presently my friend's wife came in. She was wearing an old black coat which hung together by stitches, and her hands were coarse and red. We talked a little while. "You are surprised to find us in such a dreadful state," she said.

I had just begun to say that nothing surprised me in Russia, when she exclaimed: "I'm not one of those who are content to lead a half life. If I have to come down I prefer to come right down—to live as people do in slums, not in pretentious poverty."

In the days when first I knew these people they had led a life of continuous pleasure and indulgence. They belonged to that section of the aristocracy whose decadence had brought about the Revolution.

We went upstairs to take tea in a little room, the only furniture of which was a wooden table and three or four chairs. On the way we passed a still smaller room which was quite empty, save for a stove and a litter of logs. We talked about the Revolution—the usual talk of terror, shooting, poverty, suffering. Like so many people in Russia they were disillusioned, disillusioned with everything, with their own class—and with human nature itself.

"You find everyone out during a revolution . . . and you find that very few aristocrats have aristocratic souls . . ." she said. And then she told me that her elder children, a daughter and a son, had gone abroad and married, and that they seldom wrote. She related also her experience when she went to sell some jewels at a shop where she had originally purchased them in the days prior to the Revolution, the roughness of the reception she had received in comparison with the obsequiousness of the treatment extended to her when she was a purchaser. The shopkeeper offered her much less than she had paid for the articles, and when she told him so, remarked, without a blush, "Anyhow, that's all they're worth to me now."

My friends knew little of what was happening in Europe. They had heard that some kind of intervention was being

prepared, and seemed to expect that before long allied armies would be marching through the streets of Leningrad.

Presently two little girls came in dressed in soiled blue frocks. Their faces were pale and old-looking; evidently they were suffering from anæmia. After curtsying in old-world style, they retired and stood with their backs against the wall, sucking their fingers and staring hard at me. I do not think that they had seen a foreigner before. After a while their curiosity was satisfied and they went out. Soon we heard them singing in the room below.

"A Bolshevik song," remarked my hostess. And then she explained that the children were her nieces, and that they had lost their parents during the Revolution. "They spend the week-ends with me," she said. "The rest of the time they're in school. They are half-starved there and are always ill. And, of course, they're taught Bolshevism. But what is to be done? It is the same with the whole of the young generation. They don't belong to us. They're different people."

I called to see my friends on several other occasions. Once they had to confess that there was nothing in the house, not even a spoonful of tea nor a log of wood. The rooms were very cold.

I found things a little better on my next visit. A servant had been employed. But what a servant! A raw peasant girl dressed in rags, whose healthy red cheeks were smeared with grime. As she went about her work she made a noise as if she were breaking up all the furniture, and unceasingly sang village songs at the top of her voice. I tried to get into conversation with her, but for a long while she stood stock still in front of me and giggled. At last my hostess persuaded her to describe the diet of the peasant in the village from which she came. Breakfast consisted of potatoes, with butter, prosta kwasha (sour milk) and black bread. No tea was drunk. The mid-day meal was equally simple: cabbage, potatoes, and kwass (a drink made from black bread). Sometimes, but not too often, meat was eaten. What was left over from mid-day made up the evening meal.

It was at Easter when I called on my friend for the last time, and my impoverished hosts insisted on dispensing some

modest hospitality in the old-fashioned Russian way. . . . Two aged ex-officials came in. When they took off their overcoats I saw that they were wearing decorations of the Tsar's time: a rather foolish little reminder this of days that were gone.

The conversation was pathetic. An attempt had been made to assassinate Zinoviev. The Red garrison of Leningrad was in mutiny. The workers, too, were revolting, and they were sick of it all. Things would happen soon. A French army was coming. . . . Leningrad was a prison—a prison with a big courtyard. How was it possible to escape? . . . How could a visa be got? . . . The Bolsheviks rarely let people out. Perhaps it was possible to escape by water. But no use to try. . . .

Armed boats patrolled the seas and fired on refugees. At one time there was an organisation which got people "out" for a big sum. Was it still in existence? Had I heard of the gallant ex-officer, at the head of a gang of desperate men, who robbed and murdered Communists in Leningrad—only Communists, for one day after holding up a lady in the streets, he made profuse apologies to her, and on returning her purse said, "I did not know that you were of the bourgeois class."

After the meal the son, a young man of 24, who had been a student in the Military Lyceum in the Emperor's time, brought out his old uniform, which had been carefully preserved, and showed it to me. He offered to accompany me back to my hotel, thinking that perhaps I might feel nervous in the empty streets.

I was in Leningrad when the ice broke up and floated seawards along the Neva. To hang one's head over a bridge and speculate as to whether this or that piece would collide with the pier beneath; to watch the icy rafts chasing and jostling one another, breaking up and re-forming again, to listen to the murmuring musical sound which they made on their outward passage—all this was very soothing to the nerves.

Often I spent an hour at a time watching the spectacle of the floating ice.



"If I could only step on to one of those pieces of ice and go with it away from here!" said a Russian companion.

"You wouldn't be any happier," I answered. "The *émigrés* are not happy. No one is happy."

"Perhaps you are right. . . . But just to breathe a little free air—to escape from this tomb. Perhaps I should be disappointed. But better that than be buried here for ever."

A few weeks later I visited a friend who lived on the outskirts of Leningrad. By this time the snow had melted; spring was in the air. We sat on a balcony at the top of a high block of flats which commanded a splendid view of the city. At about half-past nine the sky suddenly became dark; a storm was evidently near. Half-an-hour later I took my departure. My friend, seeing that the weather was so threatening, expressed regret that I had to leave, but remarked that in Soviet Russia no guests were allowed to stay after ten o'clock without the permission of the police. No sooner had I descended to the street than the storm broke; it was one of those terrible storms the memory of which lasts a lifetime. Not a single soul was to be seen anywhere. It was impossible to walk on the pavement; the gutters of the roofs were out of repair, and torrents of water flowed to the street below. In the roadway it was no better, for big pools filled up the numerous holes which had resulted from the extraction of wooden blocks for fuel. After three-quarters of an hour's walk I came to the Neva, the waters of which were boiling. Just as I was half-way across the bridge one of the big electric lamps flared up amid a shower of sparks.

I began to run. Then a second lamp flared up, illuminating the whole scene for a considerable distance. I thought that the bridge would be set on fire, but I did not wait to see what would happen. As I groped my way along the whole length of the Neva quay, which is lined with deserted palaces. I met with only one person. As soon as I caught sight of him I began to make a *détour*, but he anticipated my movement by crossing quickly to the other side of the road. When I reached the hotel, the police-porter handed over the key of my room without making a remark of any kind.

Next morning the sun was shining. As soon as I went out I was greeted by a little girl who had a chubby face, rosy cheeks and laughing eyes. She was dressed in peasant fashion—in a bundle of clothes with a shawl over her head, and wore socks and big boots. Near her was a bath-chair in which sat an old woman with an emaciated and refined face. The little child curtsied, and I gave her a few roubles, when she curtsied again, after which she ran into the roadway and began to dance with joy. Meanwhile the face of the old woman in the bath-chair lighted up with a smile.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### ART AND THE REVOLUTION

It has been laid to the credit of the Russian Revolution that, whereas it so ruthlessly destroyed the old order of society, it was careful to preserve all the art treasures which that old order had accumulated. In this one respect its behaviour was certainly more civilised than that of the French Revolution. But for its restraint it more than made up by its extravagant destruction of common property and of human life, the sum total of which far exceeded that of the French Revolution, or, probably, of any other revolution known to history. Much of this havoc was the consequence of the unconventional political system which was introduced; much of it was the expression of that ardour for destruction which is inherent in the expansiveness of the Russian nature. How, then, are we to explain the contradiction that, with few exceptions, all the art treasures of the nation were cared for? The true explanation is, I think, to be sought in the drastic character of the Revolution itself, which confiscated the property not merely of the aristocracy, but of the bourgeoisie as a whole, rich and poor alike. Such expropriation, moreover, was not restricted merely to substantial property, but was often applied to articles of common use, even to trifles which had no other than a sentimental value. Thus there was made available an ample fund of goods and chattels wherefrom to satisfy the mob's passion for plunder, and there was no need to loot the national treasure-houses, of which the Revolutionary Government at once took possession.

A secondary reason why these storehouses were so scrupulously preserved was that intelligent and enthusiastic custodians were not lacking. Members of the aristocracy and of the educated classes, deprived of their customary livelihood, immediately sought to put their knowledge and

taste to practical use, and entered the service of museums and art galleries. Their reward was meagre; at the most they were paid only a few shillings weekly, but they were out of the hurricane of the Revolution, and were pursuing an occupation which was not uncongenial. Thus it may be said that to some extent the museums in Russia have taken the place of monasteries; driven from life, many cultivated people have found consolation in befriending art.

In numerous instances, former owners of collections were permitted to remain as curators of objects which once belonged to them. When I was in Moscow, M. Morosov, who was the cotton king of Russia in the old days, showed me the art collection which had been taken from him, together with the palatial house in which he had lived. He now occupies a small bedroom in this house, and his official duty is to conduct the public round the collection, for which he is paid a salary, less in amount than an errand boy would receive in this country. He is an Old Believer, and among the treasures which he had gathered together were a number of precious ikons. He told me that when the Revolution came he could not tear himself away from his collection, but that he preferred to stay with it and endure whatever his fate might be. He was aged-looking and shabbily dressed. His eyes brightened up whenever a word of appreciation was spoken of his pictures. I imagined that he still felt that they were *his* pictures.

A few days later I was travelling in a train near Moscow when I caught sight of a large group of cotton mills.

"They belonged to Morosov before the Revolution," my companion said.

Yet when all conditions favourable to the preservation of treasure have been taken into account, considerable credit still remains to the Soviet Government for its sincere devotion to art. Lenin liked to think of himself as an artist—a sort of Leonardo da Vinci in the strategy of revolutions. "Revolution," he said, "is an art, and must be carried out as an art." But for artistic objects he professed no reverence, and when someone dared to remonstrate with him for permitting the bombardment of the Kremlin, he scorned the idea that the Social Revolution should be



impeded by ancient architecture! But other Bolshevik leaders had more of the typical intelligentsia strain in them and were anxious to secure a reputation for being cultured. And so it came about that the Soviet Government took to art with great enthusiasm.

The drastic confiscation of all property had resulted in a vast accumulation of objects, rightly or wrongly regarded as of artistic merit. The contents of all monasteries, churches, palaces, and private houses had been seized, and in some instances a rough-and-ready separation made of valuable from non-valuable objects. Numerous collections were left in the buildings where they were found and there exposed to public view; others were removed to State museums, or museums were created in which to house them.

The famous Hermitage in Leningrad gained five thousand new pictures including some fine Rembrandts taken from the house of the Stroganov family, which makes the collection of pictures by this master in the Museum probably the most representative of its kind in existence. The Winter Palace, adjoining the Hermitage, has been converted into a museum, and together these two buildings compose what is probably the largest museum in the world. The Hermitage, it may be added, has a library of 150,000 books on art.

The work of assortment and arrangement is not complete, nor will it be, I imagine, for many years. A great deal of selection still remains to be carried out. In Moscow three thousand pieces of silver, and in Leningrad fifty thousand pieces of china have yet to be sorted, and all the museums contain storerooms littered with objects of various kinds. Naturally much that is counterfeit as well as much that is genuine has been brought to light, and many "old masters" that were revered for generations as family heirlooms have been exposed as fakes.

I spent much time visiting collections in different parts of Russia. Everything that is valued for beauty is included in them—and in quantities, too, as never before seen by human eye, for nowhere and in no period in history were so many treasure-houses ransacked at one and the same time, and nowhere and at no period in history has the loot

of a whole Empire been concentrated and catalogued, and exposed to public view. Think of the immensity of the territory from which this precious accumulation was brought together—a territory stretching from Europe to the remotest East. And have in mind, too, that Russia is a land of which little is known compared with that which waits to be revealed. For in spite of rich discoveries already made, the exploration of her treasure has only just begun.

I will make no attempt to classify the objects in the collections which I visited, for to do so would be to write a museum catalogue of interminable length. Nor will I describe particular exhibits, which would only make tedious reading and convey but a poor idea of the objects seen. A work of art is an individual and self-sufficient creation. It cannot be repeated nor described; it must itself be visible if it is to be appreciated and understood.

The dominant impression which I got at the time, and which remains with me still, was of quantity—quantity of exquisiteness. I recall now that, day after day, I underwent the same experience—tramping through a succession of rooms filled with beautiful things, and towards evening succumbing from sheer physical fatigue, and feeling dizzy from the glitter of gold objects, jewels and gems, as a man dazed from the glare of a brilliant sun. All the riches of the Byzantine Empire were, so it seemed, resurrected. And yet I am conscious that I saw only a relatively small portion of Russia's treasure. But what I did see convinced me that this treasure is unrivalled. The neatly arranged collections in the museums were impressive enough to behold, but still more so, I thought, were the unsorted accumulations. The courteous curator of a museum—often a museum in a remote provincial town—would unlock the door of an ante-room, and at once a shimmering vision confronted the eye. A confused assortment of chalices, cups, censers, crosses, and mitres were strewn about on tables, while sometimes floors too were littered with a paraphernalia of precious objects.

The Trades Unions organise groups of workers (excursionists, as they are called), and these groups travel from all

parts of the Republic to visit galleries and museums, where the exhibitions are explained to them by specially chosen guides.

In Moscow, three collections belonging to three brothers named Schukin, who were wealthy merchants, have been taken over by the State. One is a collection of French paintings, a second of Dutch paintings, and a third of old Russian paintings. I happened to be present at a time when a group of workers from a canning factory were being shown the collection of French paintings, which, I believe, is one of the most representative in Europe.

Standing before a Matisse, the lecturer (a woman) explained that the colouring was very joyous, and that the picture reminded her of fresh spring water.

"I can't see it," replied a young man whose face bore the sullen expression of one who is engaged in thinking hard.

"Then you're spoilt by old bourgeois culture," replied the lecturer.

A little later she remarked upon the simplicity of another picture.

"It's not real simplicity," snapped out the young man, "it's the simplicity of the bourgeoisie overfed with luxury."

A "Still Life" by Cezanne puzzled a young Jewish woman of the party.

"Why does he choose such a simple subject?" she asked; "just some fruit, no idea in it."

And then she went on to say in a loud voice that a picture without an idea made no appeal to her.

A Cubist work by Pissaro was greeted with frank disapproval, whereupon the lecturer replied, with an air of superiority: "We are provincial beside Paris."

"Provincial so far as technique goes, not in regard to idea," answered the young man in an equally self-assured tone.

At intervals the party of workers broke up into little groups, the members of which argued one with another and sometimes voices were raised.

I was present in another gallery when a guide made a few remarks about a picture representing a family of the wealthy class seated at a table laden with good food.

"The bourgeoisie liked to eat and to have pictures painted by celebrated artists depicting their feasts," she said. And a little later, before the portrait of a wistful-looking young lady dressed in the fashion of the eighteenth century, she remarked, "Note how *blasé* she looks—a typical representative of a decadent class."

On another occasion a party of workers stood before portraits of a Countess and of a well-known Jewish dancer, both the work of a celebrated painter.

"The Countess," said the guide, "consented to have her portrait painted on one condition only, that it should never be placed in proximity to that of the dancer. The artist agreed to her condition, but now everything is changed. The Revolution knows no distinctions, and so we have put the two alongside each other!"

While in Moscow I visited an exhibition of recent paintings of workers and of working-class life in the factories. Realism and idealisation were strangely intermingled; either the workers were represented as vigorous, stalwart figures symbolic of the new age of proletarian vitality, or as bent and broken from toil, symbolic of the degradation of life of the old order. But the exhibition was certainly interesting; I could not help reflecting that it was a blot upon middle-class civilisation, that its artists found factory life too ugly and too repulsive to be painted, and that they preferred, whenever they immortalised the people, to choose as their subjects peasants, whose squalid existence could be covered up with pastoral affectation.

The Church has been forced to pay heavy tribute to the Revolutionary State. Gold and silver objects regarded as having no artistic merit were seized and melted down, or otherwise disposed of during the famine period, while those objects which had artistic merit were removed to museums. Objects which were in the nature of permanent fixtures and which had artistic value were left undisturbed. Thus in the Cathedral of St. Sofia, in Novgorod, the sixteenth-century ikonostas, richly adorned with gold and silver and containing some rare Byzantine paintings, still stands where it has always stood.

The ikonostas, it should be explained, is one of the most



ornamental features in Byzantine churches. It consists of a screen separating the apse from the nave, sometimes so high as to reach to the vaulting, and usually containing three doors, the centre one of which is known as the "Gateway to Heaven." This screen is frequently decorated with columns of silver and other precious materials. Between the columns, in arched compartments, are paintings of the Saviour, the Blessed Virgin, St. John the Baptist, and the saints to whom the church may be dedicated. The doorways of the ikonostas are closed by silk curtains, which are drawn back at the moment of the consecration, a custom which dates from the earliest periods of Christianity.

In contrast to St. Sofia, in Novgorod, with its elaborate ikonostas, the famous Kazan Cathedral in Leningrad, which is modelled on the lines of St. Peter's in Rome, looks desolate; for there all the silver adornments have been taken away by the Bolsheviks, and the Cathedral itself wears a neglected aspect. Vast quantities of objects confiscated from the churches have been stored in museums—ikons, chalices, patens, censers, reliquaries, mitres, vestments and robes heavy with pearls, altar-cloths, large palls for covering tombs, embroideries, sacred books in golden bindings and enamel liturgical books.

Of all the possessions acquired from the Church by the Revolution, ikons were the most interesting and valuable, and the work done in restoring them to their original beauty stands out as a fine contribution to universal culture during a period in which civilisation in Russia was at a low ebb. This achievement has cast new light upon Russian history, and its importance, therefore, can only be appreciated if its story is recited in some detail and related to the remote past.

Ikons symbolise prayers, express a mystical conception of hymns, and illustrate the lives of sacred personages. They were introduced into Russia in the tenth century, during the reign of Prince Vladimir ("the red little sun," as he was called in popular legend), when, after all religions had been solemnly inspected, the Greek Faith was chosen from Byzantium because its ritual was so splendid and decorative, its choral singing so magnificent and moving. Five centuries

before, Byzantine or East Christian art had rendered a conspicuous service to the barbarians in the West. Previously the art of these barbarians, derived as it was from Near Eastern sources, had been restricted to ornamental forms. It was Byzantium, with its continuity of Hellenistic tradition, that brought to them the art of the human figure, and so enabled them to illustrate the Christian Faith and make an appeal to religious exaltation. Thus the contribution of Byzantium to art and religion was on a universal scale. It created life, where hitherto there had only been frozen ornamentation. This life, though depicted in human form, was the life of the spirit, not of the flesh, and therefore to the human eye it seemed inhuman and remote.

Thus it may be said that Byzantine art solely concerned itself with perfection; but its basis was the belief that perfection was only attainable in the world of the spirit. Hence it inevitably became an authoritarian art of rigidly prescribed form, and the studios of its painters were monastic cells and hermits' retreats. It sought to express the unchangeability of ancient faith, and in so doing became unchangeable itself. Ikons were regarded not as individual productions, but as creations of the people handed down through generations, as poems composed of separate episodes making an orderly complete whole, as books comprehensible alike to the literate and to the illiterate. It was not surprising that the world should one day weary of the æsthetic standards of Byzantium. Ten centuries after it was first introduced to Western Europe came the Renaissance, when, furious to escape from its tomb of austerity and find joyful expression for human passion, art revived classical paganism, while still clinging to Christianity, from which greivous contradiction it has vainly struggled to extricate itself ever since.

But the experience of Russia was not that of Western Europe. The Renaissance reached her at a time when her conversion to the Christian Faith was a more recent memory, and when Byzantine art was still fresh on her soil. Her geographical proximity to the original sources of this art, and thus of Christianity itself, must also be taken into account when we seek to explain the fact that she resisted

rather than welcomed the humanising influences of the Renaissance. An orthodox bishop of the period, criticising Western influences in Russian ikonography, made use of these words: "Look at those Holy Ikons which please God, and see how well His image has been painted—the face, the hands, the nose, all feelings and emotions. See how the sacred features are exhausted and refined from toil, fasting and sorrow. How you have transformed this image! In the place of the image of God you have put your own image—impertinent, fat-bellied, fat-faced, with arms like thick stool-legs. And how you have straightened out the wrinkles in the divine face. When the old masters lived it did not come into their heads to do this, but you have done it!"

And towards the end of the sixteenth century, at a time when Western Europe had the profoundest respect for learning, we read in Russian scholastic copy-books denunciation of lay erudition, the roots of which (it was said) had sprouted on the soil of Greece and Rome, and exhortations to "love simplicity rather than wisdom, and seek not that which is above thee, nor attempt that which is over-deep for thy understanding, for whatsoever is given thee of God shall be meet for learning, and cleave thou fast unto it."

Half a century later we find the Patriarch Nikon ordering all ikons of the new school of painting to be seized and destroyed. And so throughout the ages the belief persisted that the austere image of Christ which Russia had inherited from Byzantium was the true universal Christ. This belief was based upon the persistence of a single expression on the Divine Face—definite, straightforward, and severe, almost inhuman—in contrast with the varied expressions on the Divine Face of the Western Christ, all of them human—as, for example, suffering, sentimental, indulgent. From the conviction that the Russian Christ was the universal Christ, followed acceptance of the prophecy that Moscow was destined to be the third and last Rome.

In the seventeenth century the art of ikon painting in Russia began to decline, and conditions were never again favourable to its revival. The introduction by Peter the Great of Western art and customs, and the intrusion of the State into monastic affairs, were followed later by the revolt

of a section of the educated class against the autocracy with which the Church had associated itself. The consequent spread of atheism proved fatal to a recovery of the old tradition in religious art. There was, it is true, much resentment against the innovations of the times, and when Peter the Great imported, amongst other classical statues, one of Venus and erected it in St. Petersburg, it was said by many, "How disgraceful to have such a fat, naked and shameless hussy in our midst!"

But the new atmosphere was definitely unfavourable to the perpetuation of religious art, and as time went on ancient ikons were neglected by the Church itself and despised by the intelligentsia, for no other reason than that these ikons were contemptuously regarded in the West. The Russian intelligentsia lacked moral courage and judgment, and were incapable of standing up for ancient Russian art in the face of ignorant foreign criticism. Soon frescoes were covered with layers of distemper or scraped from walls to make room for appalling new productions. Ikons, too, were painted over, often as many as six or seven times, and before long their surfaces became blackened with the smoke of oil lamps, or defiled with candle grease. The painting over was frequently done, not by the hands of artists, but by those of ordinary workmen.

Usually the ikons were composed of wood and were sometimes looked upon, not as objects of sanctity nor of art, but merely as "old ikon boards." Religious people, who wished to get rid of their ikons, never used a chopper upon them. Instead they burnt them whole or floated them away on rivers. It was seriously believed that such methods of destruction involved no sacrilege. But when discarded ikons were rescued from rivers, the finders regarded them as divine apparitions. Here one exception must be noted. The Old Believers, a sect which suffered much persecution because of their fanatical devotion to ancient faith, and whose religion bore a strong resemblance to primitive Christianity, always appreciated and revered ikons, and it is largely due to the enthusiasm with which they collected these ikons, and cared for them, that so many are preserved to this day. In former times they were compelled to worship in secret



chapels, which often consisted of underground huts hidden in the recesses of dark forests, and it was in these chapels that the precious ikons were kept. At the same time they created a guild of ikon-masters, composed of men whose learning was not great, but who were possessed of an intuitive judgment that enabled them to recognise, by a variety of little signs, precious paintings hidden beneath black surfaces, and to discern the differences between various periods which none others could perceive. The Old Believers for the most part were simple people. They understood little of art in the accepted sense of the word, but they were gifted with true taste, the basis of which was religious sincerity. Among all the Orthodox communities they are now considered to be the best-living; thus the sacred ikon which they have cherished so devoutly has conferred honour upon them.

In 1905 a few individuals began to make collections of ikons. These collectors were men of broad European outlook who had learned to appreciate ancient Russian art by contrasting it with Western art, but it was not until 1910 that the collection and restoration of ikons began on a serious scale. It went on until 1914, when the war caused some interruption. In 1918, a year after the Bolshevik Revolution, it was resumed again, and it has continued ever since.

The search for ikons has been carried out by small groups of enthusiasts who made long and hazardous journeys to the remotest places of Russia, penetrating marshlands and deep forests, and visiting territories which never before had been reached by educated people. Frequently these journeys were made on sledges in winter, when the wide steppe was covered with snow. Sometimes important discoveries were made in lonely monasteries situated on islands in broad lakes or large rivers, and many of the most exquisite paintings were found in unobtrusive little cemetery churches.

Hundreds of ikons were found rotting in sheds and lofts where they had been lying for many years without the least protection from damp and frost. Many were worm-eaten and covered with filth, and the great antiquity of some was attested by the fact that they had been rudely shaped with

an axe. In earlier days the priests had disposed of numerous ikons to enterprising merchants, who, learning that these ikons had a value, offered in exchange for each one a few kopecks or a new and freshly painted ikon, which was gladly accepted.

It is curious that the Revolution, which was atheistic and destructive, should have so greatly facilitated the conservation of Russia's ancient religious art. For the first time free access to churches and monasteries was possible. Then the attention of cultured men, who in normal times would have been otherwise occupied, was diverted to the task of collection and restoration, a task which was organised on a serious scale with financial assistance from the State, which, though slender, was better than nothing at all. Lastly, the stripping of metal embellishments from the ikons, which was carried out during the famine period, exposed to light valuable paintings which had been partly covered up for very many years. A conference of artists, physicists and chemists was summoned to determine the best method of restoration. Studios were created in all ancient centres, with headquarters in the Kremlin at Moscow, and Mme. Trotsky was put in charge of the work.

When I was in Yaroslavl I witnessed the process of restoration. No re-painting nor re-touching took place. Equipped only with a small knife, and applying minute quantities of oil and ammonia, as occasion required, an artist was enthusiastically at work. With delicate skill he scraped all the blackened surface of the painting, and—as the smoke, grease, and layers of paint accumulated throughout the ages vanished—the refined lines and delightful colours of a picture dating back to the eleventh century appeared, looking as bright and as fresh as if it had been painted but yesterday. It was enthralling to witness with one's own eyes the dawn of so long a night, to see, for example, a dirty green garment replaced by one of spotless white, or some exquisite gold decoration revealed, where hitherto there had only been a sombre patch.

Many interesting frescoes were also brought to light during the period of the Revolution. Restorers, standing on rough scaffolding built to a great height, their fingers

benumbed from the cold, worked long into the winter night, by the aid of the dim light of paraffin lamps. In a church in Novgorod I climbed up the scaffolding which still remained, and saw some of these restored frescoes dating back to the fourteenth century, and the man whose hands had resurrected them told me that he received only twenty roubles a month, which works out at about 10s. weekly. Old embroideries of unexampled beauty have also been discovered. Many of them had been neglected, as the ikons had been neglected, but they are now being restored by a group of young ladies.

The salvaged ikons must be numbered by the thousands. Owing to the poverty of the State, the progress of restoration has now slowed down, and at present no more than half-a-dozen ikon-masters are employed. There are several collections in Moscow, while in Leningrad at the Alexander III Museum examples of various schools may be seen, dating from the tenth to the seventeenth centuries. In some of the ancient provincial centres exhibitions not less valuable have been formed. I visited museums at Yaroslavl and Novgorod, both of which contain numerous ikons. The collection at Novgorod was of unique interest. That was not surprising, for Novgorod gave its name to a school whose creations are considered by many judges to be the finest. The ikons of which it was composed were gathered together and restored while the turmoil of the Revolution was still raging, under the supervision of two men whose passionate devotion to ancient art brought them solace during a period when despair had penetrated into every home. These two men were dressed in rags; but they were radiantly happy. It seemed that the Revolution had passed them by, for they spoke of nothing but ikons, and upon their faces was the inspired expression of mortals who are not of this world.

Of the ikons discovered by the Revolution, some few go back to the fifth century, but most of them belong to the twelfth century and to various periods up to the seventeenth century. This fact is of the first historical importance. Most Russian archæologists of the old days did not credit Russia with a serious art until the sixteenth century or the

beginning of the period of the Moscow Tsars. Their ignorance was not difficult to explain, for they had no feeling for religious antiquity, no love nor understanding of old ikons, the blackened surfaces of which they studied under the illusion that they were studying the original paintings. Later knowledge improved, and attention became concentrated upon the ikons of the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. These ikons were created at a time contemporary with the Palæologi period, when the art of Byzantium awakened to a last birth.

Once on Russian soil Byzantine art was enriched with the strange ornamentation and colours of the pagan Slavs, but it was not until the fifteenth century that a definite Russian ikon crystallised. The fifteenth-century ikon is considered to be the nearest to perfection. But discovery within recent years of numerous ikons of the eleventh century affords abundant proof that Russia produced an art contemporary with that of the brilliant Comnenian period of Byzantium.

The final conclusion is justified that between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries Russia possessed a civilisation which was of a higher spiritual level than that of later times, and which is the basis of Russian genius in art. What is more, this civilisation spread its influence in the West. Examples of Russian art of this period are to be found as far afield as the Baltic States, and in Sweden and Galicia. Such circumstances may be accounted strange when it is reflected that two centuries of Tartar domination intervened, but it must not be forgotten that Genghis Khan and his Golden Horde were content to exact tribute from a remote stronghold on the Volga, and that so long as this tribute was forthcoming the Russians were left alone to develop as God willed.

Thus the investigation of the ancient art of Russia, for which we are indebted to the Revolution, has established the fact that Russia is a land with a civilisation as ancient as that of Western Europe. That she has not reaped the full fruits of this civilisation is due to the difficulties of her geographical situation. Forced to war against the East in order to save herself, she became the protector of the West.



But the West, troubled by her immensity, feared her almost as much as it did the East, and thrust her back again and again.

The Imperial palaces and parks have been left undisturbed, and they are now open to the public. It is possible to follow the domestic history of the Romanov Dynasty from the old Boyar House in Moscow (dating back to the fifteenth–sixteenth centuries and where in troubled times the first of the Romanovs was born) through various palaces to that of Tsarskoye Selo, where in troubled times again the last episode of the Dynasty took place. Among other palaces, I visited the Winter Palace in Leningrad and the Palace of Tsarskoye Selo, both of which had tragic associations with the Imperial Family.

In the Winter Palace may be seen the iron bed on which Alexander II died from wounds inflicted by his assassins, and stains of blood are still visible. The apartments occupied by Nicholas II are now open to view. In the library the guide drew attention to a small table, and said, "There Nicholas signed death-warrants." And a little later he remarked, "Alexander IV lived here." He was alluding to Kerensky, whose Christian name was Alexander, and who took up his residence in the Palace after the Revolution.

Both in the Winter Palace and in the Tsarskoye Selo Palace, the apartments in which the Imperial Family spent most of their time are furnished in a common fashion without any regard for taste or style. Numerous little articles picked up in the market-place for a few pence, or simple pictures of no value whatsoever, are to be seen. The house in which Lenin spent his last days was furnished more pretentiously than these apartments of the Imperial family.

At Tsarskoye Selo there are two palaces; one is very large and grand. It was built in the eighteenth century to the design of Rastrelli, and was named after Catherine II. It contains many rich and sumptuous apartments—apartments of blue and gold; of white and gold; of agate; of amber, with floor of mosaic on which stands jewelled furniture; of lapis lazuli, with floor inlaid with mother-of-pearl; of classical styles; of marble; of Chinese and Japanese

decorative designs ; and one small room with a bath which was specially installed for President Loubet when he visited Russia.

No wonder that the Emperor and Empress desired to escape from the oppression of so much splendour, and took up their residence in the smaller and more homely Palace named after Alexander I. Over both palaces the Red Flag now flies. It is the smaller of the two that attracts the most interest, for here history associated with the Revolution was made. The Empress's bedroom is small and simply furnished. At the windows are curtains made from that cheap print material of which peasants are so fond. The walls are covered with white cottage paper, sprinkled with pink flowers. On one side hangs a picture, evidently purchased in England, of a young girl gathering flowers, entitled "Roses." Behind the brass-knobbed bed (on which a lace cover is laid) are very many ikons and at the back is a little closet, the walls of which are covered with ikons. The faint scent of oil and wax still lingers in the room. The Empress's own sitting-room resembles an average English drawing-room, and is a confusion of cosy sofas, chairs, shelves, tables, simple ornaments, and intimate photographs, prominent among which is a family group taken during the war. In an adjacent corridor, standing on a small table, is a pencil sharpener to which is attached a piece of paper, whereon these words are written in the Emperor's own hand, "It is broken, do not touch," and in a dressing-room the Emperor's military caps are still hanging up, and some hair-brushes have been left upon a table. The most impressive apartment, so I thought, was the tiled swimming-bath. In one room, I do not remember exactly which, was a polished glissade down which the children, and frequently the Emperor himself, used to slide. It is now covered with a blatant red cloth. In one of the Empress's rooms there is a tapestry copy of a portrait of Marie Antoinette, and in the billiard-room a collection of books relating to Napoleon, of whom the Emperor was an admirer. In the Emperor's room in the Winter Palace in Leningrad stands a large picture of Napoleon.

The guide who showed parties over the Tsarskoye Selo

Palace was an old soldier who had been in the service of the Imperial Family for thirty years. Included in the party which I joined were a number of workers. On entering the dining-room one of them said, "I suppose the Emperor drank a good deal of champagne."

The guide answered, "Never while I was in the service of the Imperial Family did I see His Majesty take more than two glasses of champagne."

And when we came to the Empress's boudoir, where the Imperial Family spent most of their time, a young woman remarked, "I suppose the Emperor often saw Rasputin here."

"I never once saw Rasputin in the Palace," replied the guide; and then after a pause he said, "I am here to show you the Palace, and not to answer such questions."

As we passed through a large salon, where balls were sometimes held, groups of visitors were dancing, and at the same time shouting loudly in order to catch the echo of their own voices.

The room of tragic memory was the large room shaped like a horse-shoe where, together with their baggage packed ready for removal, the Imperial Family spent their last night before departing for Siberia. It is a formal apartment containing only divans protected by white loose covers, white sculptures, and large portraits. It leads direct to the park where the Emperor, when taking exercise during the period of his arrest, was prodded with the butts of rifles and told, "You can't go here, you can't go there, stand back when you're ordered."

Not long ago the Bolsheviks published some correspondence which showed that a queer group of holy men, prophets and eccentrics, had access to the throne. One member of this group, a bare-footed peasant who played the rôle of wise idiot, and was deaf and dumb, wrote to the Emperor in 1912, five years before the Bolsheviks seized power, saying that those who kept him in ignorance in order to preserve his peace of mind were in reality destroying the foundations of his power, that they were sweeping the country into revolution, and that soon the throne would

shake and the Emperor receive a terrible shock. And another of the queer group warned the Emperor that around the throne and in the court of the Grand Dukes there were masses of atheists and disreputable characters. The warning concluded with these words: "The real monarchists say that the Tsar is sacrificing us, together with our heads, while the left rejoice that the Tsar's regime is weakening. Everyone says that no power survives in the State."



## CHAPTER XL

### THE REVOLUTIONARY THEATRE

LONG before the Revolution took place, a section of the Russian Theatre had been daring and experimental. When the upheaval came the last restraint that lingered in the minds of the leaders of this advanced section broke down, and startling innovations made their appearance even where hitherto severe traditions had ruled. The result is that of all the institutions of Soviet Russia, the theatre may be described as the most peculiar and interesting. Composed of a wonderful assortment of antiquity and modernity, of mechanism and mysticism, of revolution and reaction, nothing like it, I imagine, has ever been seen before.

Of this new movement in the Russian Theatre, French critics said : It is the most dangerous and aggressive movement that ever menaced the theatre. Its decoration, costumes, presentation, stage arrangements, interpretation, all threaten the destruction of that dramatic art which has been the creation of several centuries.

If we are to understand all the changes and contradictions of the Russian Theatre we must picture in our minds the atmosphere that accompanied its birth in the early days of the Revolution. Those were the days of hunger, slaughter and disease, the days when the masses were delirious with revolutionary passion. All the old values were discarded, all the old faiths broken. Abstract beauty counted for nothing, and all the emotions arising from the common troubles of life ceased to have any importance. The problems of love, marriage, and divorce lost their meaning. The Revolution was pitiless ; its immediate aim was to destroy the bourgeoisie as a class. From this it followed that all the old plays representing bourgeois life were looked upon as contemptible. How could the Revolution possibly interest itself in the romanticism of passions which

it sought to destroy, and in drama based upon sex relations, or upon complicated situations arising from a morality (or immorality) which it condemned? What the Revolution demanded was that the theatre should mock and sneer at the fallen class; that, in a word, the Revolution itself should be staged in the theatre and dramatised as the new life—the new world.

And the advanced leaders of the theatre joyfully seized the occasion for revolutionising the technical side of their art. It is impossible, within the limits of a single chapter, to describe in any detail wherein they differed one from another, but the important fact was that each and all were inspired by a single dominant motive, to assert the rights of the actor. This called for the ruthless destruction of the lumber of the past. Gone are the beautiful and sentimental pictures of the old epoch, the colourful fantasies of Bakst and his school! Gone, too, are the days when the actor was no more than a bright splash on a background of flat scenery, a mere figure in the living drama of a painter! Gone are the days of cheap glitter and effects. Instead, we find that the centre of the theatre is a man; all that exists, exists for him and him alone. This man, the actor, creates the theatre, *is* the theatre. The scenic painter, as the term was commonly understood, has vanished, and in his place we get the scenic artist. This scenic artist has much more to do than the painter of former days. But despite the importance of his rôle, he is quite subordinate to the actor, for his function is to create a scene, an atmosphere in which the actor may live his part, a form, so to speak, in which this actor may re-incarnate. And the problem which confronts him is to organise space and overcome its limitations. Before describing his attempts to solve this problem, brief allusion must be made to the past, for unless we know something of what has gone before, it is impossible to appreciate what is happening now.

During the last century, until the 'eighties, stage scenery had no great importance in the Russian Theatre. It was painted by a workman and not by an artist, and had little pretence to be more than it was—a painted piece of canvas. It failed entirely to express the rhythm, the essence or the

pathos of a play; in fact, it lacked the quality of true art. Often the same scenery was used for various plays. As a consequence, it became stale and familiar to the audience, who in the end regarded it as something irreplaceable, something which had inevitably to be where it was and as it was. But this absence of external effects favoured the actor. He was complete master of the stage, for he alone created whatever illusion was conveyed to the public, and awakened in them whatever emotion they felt. It might be said that in the light of modern ideas this was as it should be. The actor *was* the theatre in those days, just as he *is* the theatre now. But one important difference has to be noted. In the 'eighties the actor was dependent wholly upon his own forces; the scenic painter rendered him no assistance. Sometimes a stage setting might be rich and pompous, but singleness of will and artistic unity were always lacking. To-day the actor is Tsar, but the scenic artist creates the throne upon which he stands.

In the middle of the 'eighties a great transformation occurred. All the leading artists took to painting for the theatre. What they sought to express was truth, but truth in a poetical, fairy-like form, in a powerful harmony of colourful splashes. Each play had its own style, its own scenery painted by a single hand, and artistic unity was consciously aimed at.

From this revolution emerged the Moscow Art Theatre, which in those days was regarded as a manifestation of extremism. Here the realism of life itself was put upon the stage. If a subject from history was chosen, then the scenic artist became an historian and a restorer of the past; if it was modern life that had to be represented, he became an illustrator, a photographer. Someone has said: "A living picture from the Moscow Art Theatre could be printed as an illustration in a book." Thus the artist of the theatre became a copyist, having no free-will, no individuality of his own. Soon a reaction set in, and what was called the conditional theatre made its appearance. The promoters of this movement argued that the realism of the Moscow Art Theatre was restricted to the external things of life, and that it failed entirely to represent the

essence or inner spirit of life ; they contended, moreover, that exact repetition of life on the stage was impossible, and that many technical problems were insoluble, in proof of which they cited the impracticability of a fourth wall. And so scenic thought again returned to a canvas background ; to the idea of decoration as conditional to the spirit of the play, as suggestive rather than actual. From this movement stylisation developed. Stylisation meant that the stage was transformed into a picture, and that everything was subordinated to style. Again the actor was relegated to a second place, and became a fugitive splash of colour, a mere accessory in a beautiful picture. Thus the theatre as a theatre ceased to exist, and in its place was substituted a painting, a panorama, a fresco, wherein the hero was completely subdued by the artist's fantasy. In a word, all the life was taken out of the actor, and he was visible only in relief, not in living form. For the artist those were golden days ; he was the despot of the theatre and the actor was his slave. Beautiful pictures, it is true, were often created, but the art of acting suffered, for where talent existed it was forced to submit itself to the discipline of the artist's purpose, which was to design a frozen picture, not a platform for the play of life. Under such oppressive conditions no art could flourish, and so it was with acting. Ultimately, the discovery was made that beautiful though the picture might appear, there was something radically wrong with it. This something was the contradiction between the three-dimensional figure of the actor and the two-dimensional character of the scenery ; in other words, a round-bodied actor, dressed in a bright costume and moving about against a flat scenic background, was a fatal disharmony in the general picture. How to devise three-dimensional scenery for the three-dimensional actor was the next problem to be faced, and the idea occurred of attaching canvas to wooden frames shaped in various forms. But it was found that the picturesque volumes thus created overloaded even the largest stage, and that the actor's individuality was crushed more than ever by the scenic effects. And so it was decided to continue experiments in a smaller theatre, the Kamerny Theatre of Moscow.



The task of the scenic artist was, as I said in the beginning, to organise space to overcome its limitations. The stage "box" of old days was too restricted, too tight. It was more of a trap or a cage than a stage whereon life could be performed. Thus imprisoned, the actor moved on a flat floor against a flat scenic background, and a fatal disharmony resulted. As well might a puppet dance before a painting and say: "This is life!"

To-day everything is changed. Stylisation has been replaced by construction—construction in the most mechanical, architectural, and modern sense of the term. For each play, and very often for each scene, a structure is built upon the stage—a stage upon a stage—and this structure has three dimensions, which harmonise with the three dimensions of the actor. Not only has the contradiction of a round figure against a flat scene been got rid of, but this round figure has now much more space in which to move, much more scope for action. Hence it is said that the actor is now dominant, that he is, in fact, the theatre.

Perhaps the best method of explaining the new theatre is not to speak of it in general terms, but to describe some of its achievements. Let us begin with the Kamerny Theatre, Moscow, which originated during the war, ripened during the Revolution, and now has a world reputation. The motto of its promoters is theatricality, their purpose theatricalisation of the theatre. The audience must never be allowed to forget that they are in a theatre. Nor must the scenic artist forget that it is for the theatre, and the theatre alone, that he creates. He must always have in mind that he is producing, not pictures, but decorative or painted scenes, buildings and constructions, amidst which an actor is destined to walk.

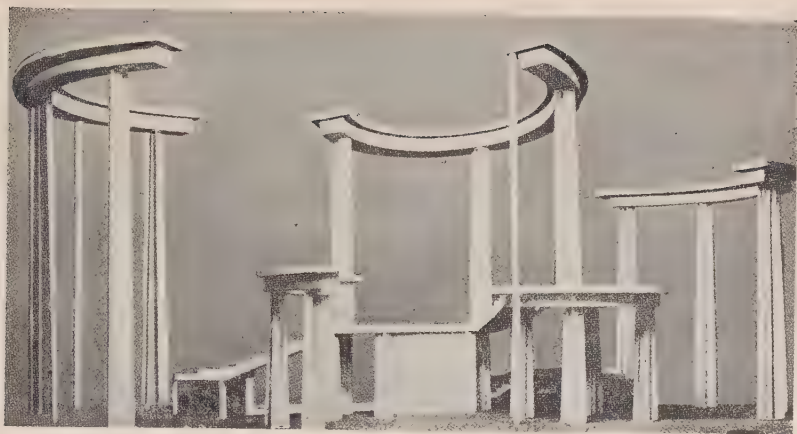
And now for the play itself. The drama is Racine's *Phèdre*. The stage is filled with geometrical volumes expressive of the rhythm of the actor and of the play. The whole cube is broken up vertically and horizontally, and every step taken by the actor places him on a new level which inclines towards the audience. The dominant idea is to take possession of—to occupy—in a word, to conquer—all space, and so create a structure that enables the actor to give

full and free expression to his art, and to enter rhythmically into the scheme of production. The actor belongs to a quite new type. As rhythmical harmony is essential, the voice, the emotions, and the body must be under control. In order to steel his nerves as well as his movements, and to enable him to move freely and lightly from level to level, every actor must have the accomplishments of an acrobat, whilst in order that he may make the fullest possible use of his voice he must also have the technique of a musical education.

And here let us return to the question of scenery. Only simple means are employed ; nothing superfluous, nothing that draws the attention of the audience away from the actor or retards quick movement is permissible. Instead of the conventional scenic background, strongly coloured lighting effects are introduced, for which purpose use is made of angular-shaped planes or sails. Yellow expresses the suffering of Phèdre, red, the calm of Aricia, and black, the vengeance accomplished in the last tragic act.

On one platform stands Phèdre, tortured with jealousy. Her face is pale and she wears a red wig and long robes. And on an opposite platform is Hippolytus. From somewhere down below at the back Theseus emerges out of the darkness. The impression conveyed is that the destiny of all mortals is in the hands of Fate and the Gods. The whole effect is magical. The audience feels itself to be in the presence of the Hellenistic World, with all its marble gods and colourful scales—a world all the more strange and beautiful by reason of its very remoteness. There is nothing archæological, nothing of the style of the antique vase in the picture. It is the spirit of Hellas that is recreated and felt ; and this, as I have said, is achieved by the most simple means imaginable : geometrical construction, broken line, and colourful splashes. The result is not still life, but living life ; not exhumation, but resurrection ; not antiquity, but the remote atmosphere of antiquity revived so that a modern audience may breathe and live through it.

Let us now leave the Kamerny Theatre for a while to look at the staging of another Greek play—*Lysistrata*—which I



STAGE SCENE FOR "LYSISTRATA." MOSCOW ART THEATRE.



STAGE SCENE FOR "PHÈDRE," BY RACINE. THE KAMERNY THEATRE, MOSCOW.





witnessed at the Moscow Art Theatre. Despite its fidelity to the old realism, the Moscow Art Theatre has also experimented with constructive presentation. The scenery of *Lysistrata* consists of half-circle colonnades (and platforms), the white and yellow columns of which are slender, graceful, and sometimes tall. The background is of dark blue illuminated with a blue light. And that is all. Vertical lines against a moonlit sky. With so rigid an economy of means triumphant results have been achieved. The impression conveyed to the mind is of spaciousness and severity—classical severity; the whole picture, in fact, is very finished, very restful, and a trifle sinister. The actor enters from below the stage by a staircase going down from the centre of the colonnades, and the colonnades revolve at intervals in full view of the audience, thus varying the composition of the picture. The turning of the colonnades facilitates quickness of movement, and introduces a note of modernity. This innovation is perhaps in the nature of a disharmony. It is true that the aim of the production is the re-incarnation of all that the audience feels about antiquity, but this audience belongs to the impatient twentieth century, and prefers (so it is assumed) to have its antiquity speeded up a little.

And now let us return to the Kamerny Theatre. The play on this occasion is *Romeo and Juliet*. The whole space of the stage is packed with a confusion of platforms, planes, ladders, and shining mirrors made from tin, and presents a mass of bright, clashing colours. One gets the impression of the narrow little suffocating streets of an Italian town, where it is almost possible to shake hands from one house to another, and the whole scene, with its crazy forms and its bright colours, suggests the virile love of Romeo and Juliet.

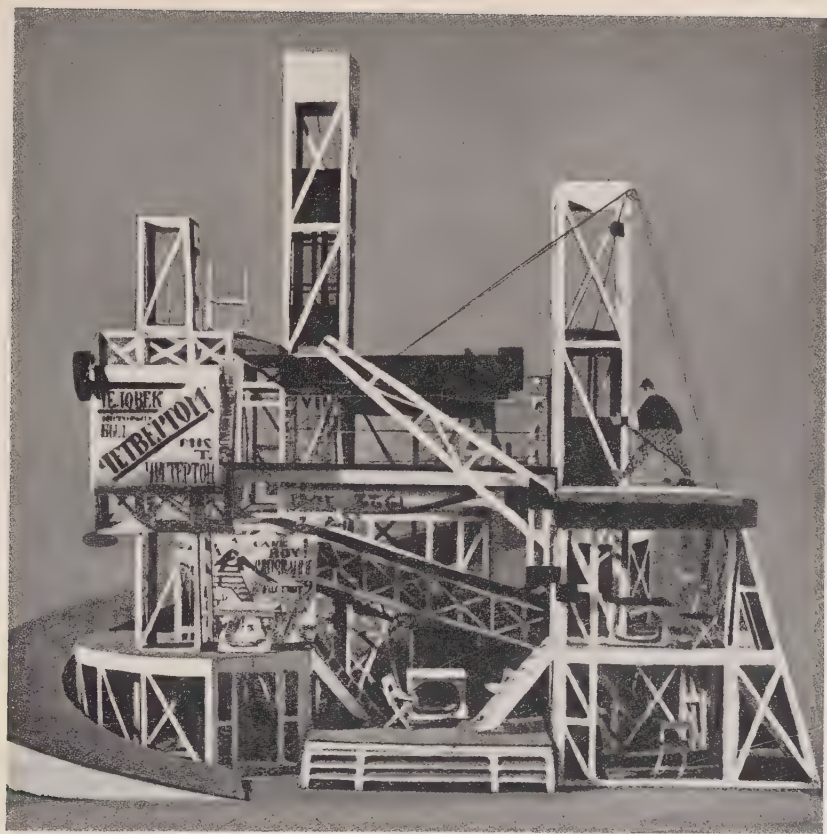
Let us view next the staging of a modern play, *The Man Who Was Thursday* (Chesterton), also at the Kamerny Theatre. Here new methods are resorted to, though principles remained unchanged. Decorative devices are banished altogether. Instead we see a structure which is nothing more than a stand whereon the actor may act his part. The aim is to reproduce the atmosphere of a noisy

European city. And so the structure consists of skeleton, tower-like erections, based upon a mass of muddled platforms, scaffolding, rails, ladders, stairways, and escalades, in the midst of which lifts go rapidly up and down and blatant placards are exhibited. In looking at this amazing product of human inventiveness, an image instantly occurs to the mind of some great building in the early stages of erection in the centre of a great city. The nature of the structure impels quick action; often the players run and chase one another. Bicycles, searchlights, and various noisy instruments are introduced to represent the cacophony of a modern city.

From *The Man Who Was Thursday* at the Kamerny Theatre we may step at once into the Theatre of the Revolution, which is the most original of all the new movements in the Russian Theatre. At the head of this theatre is Meyerhold, a man of gifts, born in Russia of German parents. He has always been a daring innovator, and his reputation is deservedly very high. During the Revolution he became a Communist and fought as a soldier in the Red Army. Of his politics nothing need be said, for he is an artist pure and simple, and it was as an artist that he saw and lived through that most dramatic of all his experiences, the Revolution.

When Meyerhold became a disciple of Lenin he totally rejected beauty and asceticism. For him brilliancy and picturesqueness, as conventionally understood, are hateful; and all embellishments of life for the purpose of theatrical effect, offensive and mendacious. Utilitarianism—severe, economical and virtuous—is what he practises. But to say this is not to suggest that he sees no beauty in the world. On the contrary, he declares that everything that is modern is beautiful—the steam-engine, the bridge, the motor-car, all are beautiful—and he insists that the theatre can only solve its problems through its own realism.

These ideas have led (or driven) him to strip the stage of all trappings, all accessories, and to adopt naked construction, bare scaffolding, complete mechanisation. It is deliberate rejection of the beautiful and the picturesque as seen through the eyes of the past, and the substitution of



STAGE SCENE FOR "THE MAN WHO WAS THURSDAY," BY CHESTERTON. THE  
KAMERNY THEATRE, MOSCOW.





modernity, mechanism, life as it is, clothed in dramatic form. No attempt, for example, is made to cover up or adorn the damp and dirty brick walls at the back of the stage; they are left just as they are. In the centre of the wide, empty, desolate space is raised the structure of scaffolding, platforms, ladders, stairways, and cranes; sometimes, moving machinery with whirling wheels or wagons travelling on overhead cables, are introduced. No part of the structure or mechanism is specially painted; the iron and wood used are in the same rough state as the iron and wood used in actual life.

The effect of this massive, sombre picture upon the spectator is remarkable. He feels that he is in a factory, not in a theatre. The powerfulness of industry is impressed upon his mind; he can see, hear and smell machinery, and nothing but machinery.

The idea at the back of Meyerhold's conception is that so long as machinery is exploited by capitalists it is bound to enslave man, but that once it passes to the control of those who work it—to the proletariat—man will be freed and poverty abolished.

Of detail there is little. All decorative objects are banished. Apart from the central structure, the stage is almost bare. Sometimes hooting motor-cars and motor-bicycles, driven by men wearing monstrous goggles, rush up a platform on to the stage. In one play, *Earth Prancing*, adapted from the French, which represents the main episodes of the Bolshevik Revolution, a Communist leader is shot by the counter revolutionaries. His body is rescued and conveyed in a red coffin on a motor-car from the back of the hall to the stage, where it is placed in a central position. A solitary woman in a blue dress (the mother of the murdered revolutionary) kneels down beside it and weeps; the bright red coffin, across which is a splash of blue, illuminated by a powerful searchlight, makes a very striking picture. Here it should be mentioned that footlights have been abolished. Three searchlights play upon the scene, one from a box at either side, and one from above. These lights sometimes cross and re-cross, or concentrate upon the spot where action is taking place, leaving the rest of the stage in darkness.

In the Kamerny Theatre, it will be recalled, theatricality was the keynote. The aim was to theatricalise the theatre, and the audience was never to be allowed to forget that it was in a theatre. The Theatre of the Revolution has something in common with the Kamerny Theatre; for example, constructive methods, a three-dimensional stage for a three-dimensional actor, and the recognition that the actor is of first importance, not the scenic artist. But where it differs from the Kamerny Theatre is in its insistence that life itself—not the theatre—must be theatricalised. For the realistic attainment of this purpose the unity of actor and audience is essential. Everything possible is done to bring the actor into close association with the auditorium, and to get rid of that mysticism or romance which hitherto has surrounded the actor no less than the drama in which he acts. In other words, the aim of the Theatre of the Revolution is to put the audience on familiar terms with the actor. The actor does not make a dramatic entry, but walks on quite simply as though he were arriving in a factory to do his day's work. Curtains are dispensed with. Only scanty furniture is used, and whatever re-arrangement of it may be required is carried out by the actors themselves in full view of the spectators. The stage, moreover, is extended far into the hall, and the actors are thus brought close to the audience and the one is merged in the other. Thus the stage is united with the stalls and action is carried into the boxes. Placards are exhibited, electric signs flash out revolutionary mottoes; and there is a screen in the centre on which phrases or pictures are sometimes projected. The action moves with lightning rapidity; one scene is no sooner taken in than the eye is confronted with another. One is reminded of the high speed of an American film production.

The play must express the spirit of the age, and the spirit of the age is revolutionary and agitational. The slogans of propaganda, the phrases of the poster, the catchwords of the pavement, it is the fleeting impressions which all these make upon the mind, ultimately moulding public opinion in a definite form, that have to be reproduced in the theatre, for they are the essence of Revolution and therefore must become the essence of revolutionary drama. The Revolu-



SCENE IN THE THEATRE OF THE REVOLUTION. A BIG STORE IN A MODERN CITY.  
Press photographers are "snapping" bourgeois ladies and gentlemen.





tion was protest, anger, destruction! And so: Down with æsthetic beauty! Down with scenic illusions! Down with the bourgeoisie!

But destruction was not everything, construction had also to be taken in account. What was this construction to be?

The answer to this question was conveyed in vague phrases: Proletarian Rule, Proletarian Control of Industry, Industrialisation of Agriculture, Electrification, Through Class Hatred to Universal Brotherhood, A New Man and a New World. Thus a complicated picture had to be painted, and therefore the scenic structure had to be complicated. The dominant idea, as I have said, was the Machine—the Machine destined to liberate the worker and all mankind.

Meyerhold points out that in the Moscow Art Theatre and in the Kamerny Theatre, the emotions govern the actor, not the actor the emotions; in other words, the emotions surge up and overwhelm the actor so that he completely loses control of himself and his play. Meyerhold totally rejects the idea that the actor must live through his own emotions. The actor, he says, must subdue both his body and his brain, and so rid himself of all imperfections that he can do in an instant as the stage manager directs. In short, he insists that the actor must know the laws of nature and submit himself to these laws.

And how does he propose that the actor shall obtain this knowledge of self, and this mastery over self? From a training in bio-mechanics, that is, from the application of the Taylor system to the art of acting. Meyerhold argues that the play of an actor is analogous to the labour of a skilled worker. The work of both is useful to the community and a social necessity, and therefore general principles of organisation are applicable to the one as well as to the other. The actor must be trained scientifically. He must not make needless movements which lead to the dispersal of his energy. And those movements which he does make must give the maximum amount of production; labour and rest must be carefully and consciously distributed. Thus the aim is to create an actor who shall be a skilled

workman in a theatre-factory controlled by a super-organiser of the type of Meyerhold.

I paid several visits to the Theatre of the Revolution and then arranged to see Meyerhold himself. After half-an-hour's tram-ride from the centre of Moscow, I alighted on a muddy road, and picking my way across a muddy courtyard, entered a dilapidated-looking building which served as the "laboratory" wherein the perfect actors and the perfect men of the future were in process of creation. I was shown into a large room. The floor was black and the walls and ceiling were stained. While waiting for Meyerhold I watched a tall, lithe, squint-eyed Tartar putting some half-dozen young men and women through physical drill. Here it should be explained that all Meyerhold's actors and actresses belong to the proletarian class, and that they work in the factories in the day-time, undergo training in their leisure hours, and perform in the theatre at night.

The young men and women whom I saw in training were lightly clad; the men wore shorts and shirts, while the women's attire consisted of bloomers and vests. Physically none of them approached perfection. The new man has not yet been made; he is only in the making. And even in Russia, where industry is still young and has not had time to break too many bodies, the raw material available is not plentiful.

Everyone was much in earnest. As a signal for the end of each movement the Tartar blew a shrill whistle. After the lapse of a few minutes, Meyerhold arrived, a man with a nervous, irritated face, a big nose, and eyes that looked into space.

"The Theatre of the Revolution," he said, "is the result of my study of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, and of the Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese theatres—and finally of the cinema. My work so far is laboratory work and is empirical. Later I will form theories. I believe the theatre has possibilities to make not only a perfect actor, but also a perfect man. Two schools exist, (1) subjectivists, (2) objectivists. The first school is composed of vitalists, the second of biomechanics. The former is based upon emotional move-

ments. It imagines that these emotional movements are separate from physical movements, that the two are worlds apart. The other school to which I belong is based upon sure, firm ground : on the physical side of man. Emotions are the production of the nervous system ; soul existence is not an element to be studied objectively. Here is the formula : N. whole actor = a (1) brain (a quite clear element which gives order to the muscles and to the nerves of the actor) + a (2), element that fulfils action. . . . There is no place for the soul. Scientists who make a study of reflexology tell us that it is replacing psychology. My aim is to lay the foundations of a race of perfect actors, of perfect men. Bio-mechanics provide for every movement of the actor, but before he enters upon training in bio-mechanics, it is essential that he should go through the discipline of physical culture, and acquire perfection in acrobatics, fencing and boxing."

"How about diet?" I asked.

"That is a question to which I am giving my attention. I am thinking out a suitable diet for the actor."

I then asked whether there was any truth in the criticism that the new system deprived the actor of all individuality?

Meyerhold replied that an actor was allowed to develop his individuality within the limits of his own part. Before we separated he praised very much the endurance of the new actor, who, he said, was able to play four hours at a stretch without feeling the least fatigue.

It remains to be added that frequently the actor in the Theatre of the Revolution is entirely without make-up, while sometimes only the slightest touches are employed to produce make-up. In some plays a special uniform resembling an engineer's overall is used ; the colour is blue and the skirts worn by the women are very short. The costumes are designed for the comfort of the actor, and they do not always harmonise with the play. In *Earth Prancing* (which I witnessed) a special form of speech known as semaphore speech was used, the emphasis being placed on the vowels ; the wailing sound produced was intended to be agitational.

The Theatre of the Revolution breathes the spirit of Revolution. For it, nothing is sacred. It has no plays

of its own, but it does not hesitate to adapt old classical plays to the needs of the hour; dates and times are hopelessly mixed up. Art for art's sake is a bourgeois prejudice. Art for agitation, for the organisation of social conscience, for the creation of a new man—these are the things that matter. The actor becomes a propagandist, the play a public meeting. There is no shrinkage from vulgarity, but it is honest, straightforward vulgarity. Do not forget that the proletariat is a virile class, one that has no use for sentimentality, and no patience with hypocrisy, or with the disguised sensuality of the old order. A new hero has arisen. A new romanticism has been created. The worker is the hero, his life the new romanticism. Not merely a few, but all workers are heroes, and the new Society, which is to be collectivist, is to be fashioned from this heroic mould. The symbol of this new society is the Machine. The Machine is sober, reliable, heroic, powerful and productive, and it is composed of many separate small parts, all of which possess these essentially proletarian qualities. The machine-man is also sober, reliable, heroic, powerful, and productive. Free him from capitalist chains and, with the aid of the Machine that enslaved him in the past, he will build a new society. And so: Down with sickly, sentimental individualism, with all its puny efforts and all its petty strifes. Long live big industry, mass production, and riches for all! Long live proletarian Americanisation! Long live Lenin, Marx, and materialism!

Meyerhold's methods, as he said himself, are experimental. That is not surprising, for he has been an experimentalist all his life. Where he may end, no one can tell.

From the rigidly Communist point of view a more orthodox movement than the Theatre of the Revolution is the theatre known as the Proletcult Theatre. This movement has gained much from Meyerhold's inspiration. The actors are workers, Communists, and propagandists. Their training is based upon games, athletics, acrobatics, and bio-mechanics; the idea, so it is said, is to free art from literary egotism and intellegentsia decadence, and relate it to the virile life of the people. The method of presentation is even more boisterous than that of the Theatre of the



Revolution; it is the method of the circus. The circus is an arena of spontaneous expression and of real heroism, as distinct from the rehearsed mincing expression and pretended heroism of the old theatre.

Consequently all the well-known tricks, trappings, and improvisations of the circus are employed: tight-ropes, trapezes, acrobatics, and clowns. Buffoonery is the dominant note of the performance. One example may be cited. Ostrovsky's play, *There is Enough Stupidity in every Wise Man*, has been staged. But it would be very difficult for anyone acquainted with the play to recognise it as Ostrovsky's work. For it has been altered out of all recognition, and ruthlessly brought up to date. The cast includes *émigré* politicians and aristocratic ladies, adorers of Rasputin, and the whole piece from beginning to end is a mockery of the frailties and traditions of the past. To create a note of modernity cinema pictures and motor-cars are introduced.

I have described the ideas of the Revolutionary Theatre as well as some of the means employed to give expression to these ideas. Two points remain for discussion: What place is the movement entitled to occupy in the sphere of dramatic art? And whither is it tending?

At present the Revolutionary Theatre is a curious hotch-potch. The methods of the fair, of the street-show, of the music-hall, of the circus, of the cabaret, and of the cinema have been employed. And the result, as was only to be expected, is the creation of a people's melodrama. This melodrama bears the mark of the artistic genius of the race, and is therefore no ordinary melodrama. But despite its struggle to achieve something new, it cannot escape reversion to the old.

For example, the Revolutionary Theatre claims that its methods are scientific, not emotional, but it cannot be forgotten that these methods are employed for the sole object of stimulating emotion in the audience. This emotion, it is true, is different from that provoked in the old theatre, but it is emotion none the less, and the only excuse for it is that it is on the side of the angels, in other words, of the down-trodden proletariat.

Another point of comparison between the present and

the past may be noted: the definite label neo-realism has been affixed to the Revolutionary Theatre, but this neo-realism repeats the chief characteristic of the old realism of the nineteenth century. It shuns theatricality in the theatre, and is content to create a background for the actor, who is supreme. But here resemblance ceases. For the modern background is not a painted scene, as was the background of former days, but a complicated structure. Upon this complicated structure an attempt is made to present life in a theatricalised form. The spaciousness of this high structure, with its many levels, though infinitely wider than the old flat platform, is still quite inadequate to the demands of life. Something more is needed.

And this brings us to the question, Whither is the Revolutionary Theatre going? Obviously it cannot remain where it is, for in reality it is not a theatre. It is a Revolution aimed at the total destruction of the theatre, and all the falseness associated with the theatre. It strives to escape from the suffocating limits of the stage box, into the spaciousness of the world outside. The ideal of the political Revolution is to create a society without a State, a society composed of perfect men for whom law is unnecessary. The ideal of the theatrical Revolution is to create a society without a theatre, a society which shall consist of perfect actors for whom dramatic canons are unnecessary. If the movement is to progress, it must come out of the theatre. It must theatricalise life itself, not merely the dreams of sedentary authors. In other words, it must follow in the path of the cinema; only, where the cinema is photographic, it must be real. The theatricalisation of life means the theatricalisation of the big events of life—of demonstrations, mass assemblies, congresses, games, parades, public funerals, and banquets. Thus we get back to the idea of the mediæval pageant, only on a very much grander scale. In Soviet Russia on one occasion one hundred thousand people took part in an open-air presentation of the main episodes of the Revolution.

The changes in the Russian Theatre began before the Revolution; whatever may happen in the political sphere many of these changes will doubtless survive. But the

extreme movement is in the nature of a revolution within a revolution. It seeks to escape from the drabness and monotony of the past, but in the process has landed into the marsh of the political Revolution. From this marsh it cannot extricate itself, for its freedom is limited by political and propagandist horizons.

To remain where it is, is impossible. Yet either retreat or advance would be suicidal. Retreat would involve abandonment of the Revolution, and would thus lead to the extinction of the Revolutionary Theatre itself, whilst advance would mean realisation of the aim of the movement, which is the total destruction of all theatres in return for the theatricalisation of life itself. The political system of which the Revolutionary Theatre is the child is in a like predicament. It must advance or retreat, it cannot stand still. And all the signs go to show that the latter course is being followed, that in other words the Revolution is receding and not going forward. Hence, the Revolutionary Theatre already finds itself in isolation, and the bourgeois theatre, the theatre of the Nepman and of the intelligentsia is once more coming into favour. Meanwhile, some of the Bolshevik leaders, including Trotsky, regard Meyerhold as a "passionate visionary," whose work is only of value for the distant future, and are sighing for a robust comedy which shall laugh "at ourselves" in the same manner as the despised bourgeoisie used to laugh at themselves in the comedies of bygone days. And they insist that the theatricalisation of life can wait; the task of the present generation, they say, is to introduce more lathes and not more art into life. Thus the Philistine is born again in the red skin of a Bolshevik.

As a last word upon the Russian Theatre, it may not be out of place to quote the views of M. Stanislavsky, the veteran director of the Moscow Art Theatre. No one has had more experience of the theatre than this eminent authority. He himself was regarded as a revolutionary in his day, and he has been an eye-witness of all the strange developments that have taken place since 1917. His final conclusion is that all scenic possibilities have been explored, and that the only master of the stage is a talented actor.

Only one problem, he says, now remains to be solved: How to create a simple and artistic background for the actor. Once this background is invented, he insists, it must be retained and not allowed to develop into luxurious and exaggerated theatricality.

So far I have only given an account of the chief movements in the Russian Theatre, those which I think are of wide interest. I regret that I have not space at my disposal in which to describe many delightful innovations of lesser importance, but I cannot refrain from mentioning the numerous little theatres which have sprung up in Moscow. In particular I have pleasant recollections of one little theatre, where, in a room no larger than that of the ordinary sitting-room, I witnessed a presentation of *The Battle of Life* (Dickens) by one of the studios of the Moscow Art Theatre. Another highly original performance at which I was present was the work of a second studio of the Moscow Art Theatre, the performance of *Princess Turandot*. A number of young ladies and gentlemen in evening dress lined up and made their bow to the audience. And then, with the aid of coloured scarves, bits of cloth, and masks, they proceeded to improvise costumes of fantastic variety with results that were both charming and convincing. As a member of the audience I got the impression that I had been invited to take part (and was actually taking part) in a very merry and refined evening's entertainment.

In regard to music in Soviet Russia, little need be said. In Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and other large cities the opera continues as before, and in many centres there are symphony orchestras. In Moscow I was present at a symphony concert where the orchestra dispensed with a conductor, but it seemed to me that the place of the latter was taken by the first violin. Soviet Russia has not yet been able to evolve a communal orchestra.

When in Leningrad I attended several concerts. Of these, the most interesting was that given by the State Academy Kapella, which is an orchestra of human voices, and an old State institution with a fine musical tradition. This choir is composed of carefully selected singers, many of whose voices are of soloist quality. It renders serious



music of all kinds, including classical compositions as, for example, those of Bach and Mozart. In the opinion of many foreign conductors of eminence it is without equal in the world, and after listening to its performance I can honestly say that this judgment is not at all exaggerated. It is an accomplished symphony orchestra of human instruments.

No new work of importance has been composed in Russia since the Revolution. Attempts have been made to re-model the works of the past according to the principles of Marx and Lenin; for example, Glinka's opera *Life for the Tsar* has been given an entirely new libretto and a new name. But some operas were considered to be altogether beyond redemption, among them Wagner's *Löhengrin*, which was banned altogether because its mystic ideology was incompatible with Communist theories.

In dealing with music, the Bolsheviki find themselves in a dilemma from which there is no escape. Recently some young Communists sent a letter to M. Lunarchasky, the Commissar for Education, protesting against his attempts to introduce Socialism into music, while at the same time encouraging classicism. The State, they said, was patronising music of a kind, which reflected decayed bourgeois ideology, and not the revolutionary spirit of the times. What was required, they urged, was agitational music.

Lunarchasky recognised that there was a certain amount of truth in the complaint of the young people, but he argued that so long as the State was so poor, and the wages of the worker were so low, musical performances could not be arranged as he should like them to be arranged. First, he said, the life of the worker must be improved, and only then could charges be imposed upon the State budget for "musical emotions." "Meanwhile," he insisted, "the demands of the public who could afford to pay must be considered."

To dispense with the music of the past would mean dispensing with music altogether. This much M. Lunarchasky admitted. He pointed out that the works of the great composers represented centuries of tradition, and that nations which neglected music relapsed into barbarism.

"My purpose," he continued, "is to introduce the new revolutionary spirit into old traditions." So far it must be confessed all attempts to achieve this object have not been very fruitful. That is not surprising, for the Bolsheviks are attempting to do what is impossible. While unable to deny the value or resist the appeal of great music, they are seeking to destroy its indestructible spirit, which expresses the creative inspiration of the composer and his epoch. The consequences are sometimes very unhappy. The spirit survives in a bruised body, and the voice that is heard is a broken but unmistakable echo of the past. Where the results are more successful from the musical standpoint, the political motive suffers. On the occasion of the recent performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Legend of the Invisible City of Kitish*, the musical critic of the *Pravda* said that on account of its mystical religious spirit, no amount of improvement would make it "a dish fit for proletarian listeners." He continued in this strain, "The more artistic and the more beautiful this music is, the more harmful is it, as it will all the more surely impart to the subconscious mind of man a religious outlook on matters of this world. Most resolutely must we unmask the falseness of the æsthetic fetishism which recognises good in all art which 'excites and forces us to suffer and experience,' for this is only a variety of the notorious formula, 'art for art's sake.' A work of art, particularly music, is good only if it inspires its audience with life and vigour, summoning to work and battle."

Here we have the test which the Bolsheviks apply to all works of art. Are they vigorous? Do they stimulate vigour?

As with the theatre, so with the opera. The ideas of the Bolsheviks lead logically to the abolition of both. Many who are not Bolsheviks will be inclined to agree that opera has had its day; and will subscribe to the theory, that the time has come when art should be more freely introduced into life.

## CHAPTER XLI

### PROLETARIAN LITERATURE

It is my intention to confine this chapter mainly to a brief outline of the literature produced by the Russian workers themselves. I am quite conscious of the fact that hardly anything is known in this country of Russian literature generally.

Only recently, Chekhov was discovered by us, whereas in Russia he is already a classic. And when to Chekhov are added Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Turgenev, we imagine that Russian literature is exhausted. As these are the only writers whose works have been completely translated, the idea has spread that none others exist. Yet even knowledge so insufficient has gained for Russian literature a high reputation in narrow circles. One cannot help reflecting how much higher and wider this reputation would be, were we to be made acquainted with the works of very many authors who have not less genius than those whom we know.

Of the writing produced during the Revolution, there is much that may be classed as literature. This assertion may, perhaps, come as a surprise to some individuals who live in the past and who imagine that the Revolution destroyed the last vestige of what is called culture. But one hundred and thirty million people could not undergo an experience so momentous without creating a literature to reflect their feelings; and so vast a calamity, and one so important for the world, could not be altogether barren of literary self-expression.

To deal with Russian literature as it should be dealt with would require not one but several books. To do justice even to Russian literature of the revolutionary period would occupy much more space than is at my disposal. Of the literature produced in Russia since the Revolution—

that is to say, literature which has seen the light of the printing-press—the work of that section known as *poputchiki* (a word which literally means “fellow-travellers”) has attracted most attention in the West. Here it should be explained that any writer in Russia who wishes to get his work published must please the Soviet authorities. He need not be a Communist in the orthodox sense of the term, but he must accept the Revolution and sing the praises of Marx and Lenin. A group of writers who come within this category are known as *poputchiki*, or fellow travellers with the Revolution. How far these fellow travellers will journey with the Revolution, it is impossible to say. Some of them have already become disappointed and have abandoned it; as for the rest their fate depends very much upon that of the Revolution, which is as yet undecided.

But in general it may be said that all non-Communist literature breathes nationalism of a kind not remote from that which has been dreamt of for centuries in Russia, and the desire for which has been quickened by the sufferings and isolation of the Russian people during the last decade. Unquestionably we are witnessing the birth of Russian patriotism. Despite all that has happened during the Revolution, the vague, intangible belief which Russians always held that Western peoples were inferior to themselves both in intelligence and in morals has become a conviction.

The Futurists are in a category by themselves. Futurism was a convenient ally of Communism; the Bohemianism of revolting artists made a strong appeal to the Bolshevism of political *émigrés*, and both met on common ground in the cafés of the West. But when it came to translating ideas into practice, Futurism was found to conflict with Communism. For while Futurism cried “Down with tradition!” Communism laid claim to tradition, the tradition of revolution, and insisted that this tradition was not merely destructive but constructive, as witness the creation of the proletarian State.

Trotsky defines the disharmony that exists between the two movements in these words: “The Communist is a political revolutionary, the Futurist a revolutionary inno-



vator of form. The trouble is not that Futurism denies the holy traditions of the intelligentsia. On the contrary, it lies in the fact that it does not feel itself to be part of the revolutionary tradition. We stepped into the Revolution, while Futurism fell into it."

The Futurists became Communists, but the Communists did not wholly accept the Futurists. They regarded them as a significant episode, as a necessary link with the forming of a new literature, but their final judgment upon them was that they thought as Revolutionaries, but felt as Philistines.

And now we come to the proletarian literature which is the main topic of this chapter. Here the question arises: Do these writings deserve the name of literature? Critics whose standards are strictly conventional have already replied in a firm negative. But in my view such a verdict is altogether too sweeping. Even when judged by accepted standards, some of this proletarian literature is quite equal to the best literature of the past.

And of the rest, a good deal reaches a very high level of excellence. Regarded as a whole, proletarian literature is strong, sincere and imaginative. Naturally its themes are quite different from those of the literature of bygone days. The workers write of what they know. They re-create their lives and feelings for us; if that is not literature, then what is? Because the lives and feelings of this very large class are unfamiliar to most of us, must we then regard their writings as of little account? The style is not perfect; technique is non-existent; but sincerity is always there. Can we only interest ourselves in the passions of amorous ladies and gentlemen and in the petty intrigues and strife of middle-class existence? Is not the life of the factory at least as interesting and as full of dramatic possibilities as that of the hotel lounge, the cabaret or the *thé dansant*? And is not the appearance of iron men in the world an event of no less importance than, say, the latest novel about a romance in a desert?

The literary gentlemen of the intelligentsia are not alone in their depreciation of the writings of the workers. The Communists themselves are apologetic for these writings. The truth is that proletarian literature, like

that of the "fellow-travellers" and the Futurists, does not come up to the required Communist standard. It is not difficult to explain the reason for this. The workers were inspired by the task of overthrowing the old *régime* and they now stand impatiently before the question, "What next?" The Communists, too, are confronted with this question; but they console themselves with the belief that one day they will reach their destination—a universal society without a State. Thus, like the theologians whom they detest, they have begun to believe in another world in the remote future. Meanwhile, the iron men who are waiting for directions as to how this new world is to be built, and who are ready to carry out the task at great speed, tell us about themselves, their lives in the present and in the past and their hopes for a future. Their language is full of mysticism; the opium of religion is still in their heads, and as a consequence they see visions.

But the Bolshevik leaders, who are highly educated atheists and whose learning was all derived from bourgeois sources, refuse to regard these visions as signs of the birth of a new proletarian culture. They say that the workers have no time as yet to think of culture, that they are too busy building up a state and defending themselves against the attacks of a capitalist world. While agreeing that a new proletarian culture is bound to come, they can give us no indication of what it will be like when it does come. That is not surprising, for the present period of transition is one of depressing poverty, and the struggle for mere existence is so acute that no one has time to make concrete plans for a perfect existence in the future. Under Bolshevism, as under capitalism, life is spent in hard toil in the factory, where it is likely to continue for very many years to come. And so the iron muscles of the iron man tremble with impatience—but life is life—and a grey life, too! Nevertheless, at least this must be conceded: for literary purposes the life of the worker is not less valuable than that of other classes. To my mind, the chief interest of this proletarian literature centres in the insight which it gives us into the psychology of a class. To glance over its pages is to make oneself fully acquainted with the lives and feelings

of the workers, and with the conditions that led up to the Revolution and are responsible for its survival. Thus the proletariat begins to produce what other classes have already produced, a literature representative of its class.

Let us first take a glimpse into a past that is now remote—the period that immediately preceded the Revolution. The lives of the authors themselves tell us much.

“One of a family of thirteen; began work when five years old in a match factory. Never received more than 23 roubles (equivalent to about £2 6s.) a month.”

“I began work at the age of five. I copied the manners of ‘grown ups’ who, because I was so serious, regarded me as one of themselves.”

“As a little boy I gathered rubbish from the street, which I sold for bread. . . . My mother was run over and killed by a railway train. After that I had to look after myself.”

These are typical biographies. Many of the writers were apprenticed to masters who beat them unmercifully; some were helped in their education by kindly-disposed masters, but most of them were self-educated.

It is often said that the downtrodden grow accustomed to their wretched environment, and do not suffer so acutely as is imagined by those who pity them; or, alternatively, that if they suffer it is in meekness. Let us hear what the poets of the downtrodden have to say on the subject. Here are a few fragments from their works:

“We were crucified by the city on a sun-broiled cross. . . . Soon we are going to love children. . . . We took sacrament in black blood and in our soul was raised up darkness. . . . We saw red seas on mountains ploughed with fire.”

“Life was dull and grey, so dull and so grey as to make one wish to smash one’s head on granite.”

And of what did life consist? kabaks\* and prisons—places wherein the people’s sorrows were buried. Russia of the past was compared with a dead hunchbacked old woman—a corpse.

\* Public-houses.

Wrote one poet :

"Bury her as quickly as possible. And you for whom her sleep was pleasure sing her funeral chants.

"But we with our sunny eyes can see through time. We can see another Russia without sorrows, without prisons, without kabaks."

And then there are stories of fatalities in the factories.

Said one little urchin : "My father was squashed in the rollers."

His companion asked : "Quite squashed ?"

"Not quite ; he lived just a little. . . . He was a strong man—a good man—with black thick hair."

Of child life in old Russia we learn much.

Some ragged working-class boys went to the park where they had arranged to play with some boys of the bourgeois class.

Just outside the park a policeman stopped them. "Not you—you dogs ! Soldiers and ragamuffin children are not allowed in here."

One boy, a little less worse-dressed than the others, protested.

"I am not a ragamuffin ; I have the right to go in."

For a reply he got a blow with a stick on his back.

And so "the beautiful green kingdom" was unattainable.

Later they met the bourgeois boys and played with them. After a while the bourgeois children went home for dinner ; their ragged companions hung about outside, waiting for them to finish.

Soon the bourgeois children emerged bringing some food for the others, which they had concealed under their coats ; cigarettes and a bottle of vodka were procured ; and in the end a free fight took place.

A carpenter's boy who had just been to town brought back all the news.

"On the University Quay I saw a black carriage taking away a democrat," he said.

"What is a democrat ?" asked another boy.

"There are such people. They're connected with the devil. The brand of anti-Christ is on them."



Here an old man intervened.

"No, they're good. I happened to work in a place with one. He was taken away and disappeared."

"What for?"

"For all sorts of things," answered the old man indefinitely.

"Because they incite the people against the Tsar. A shop assistant told me," interrupted a cheeky boy.

Meanwhile another boy was in a state of great perturbation. While mixing up the glue-pot with a stick he had been striving hard to picture a democrat. At last he turned to the old man and said: "What are they like—black or white?"

"When you cross them, black, but in the ordinary way white," answered the old man. "The one with whom I worked was a lawyer. God give him help! A good lad he was. Hair like a deacon's."

"But where are they taken to?" asked the boy.

No one answered.

Afterwards the picture of a democrat left upon the boy's imagination was as follows: without a cross, black; with a cross, white. When the anti-Christ brand is on the body of a democrat he rowdies against the Tsar, and for this he is taken away in a black carriage. And the boy puzzled his mind for two whole days thinking: And where is the place from which these democrats never return?

Two boys were having a little talk.

"Father drank a bit. But that doesn't matter. He was a good man. He even read forbidden books."

"Forbidden?"

"Yes, forbidden because the real truth was written in them."

"And who forbids the truth to be written?"

"Oh, you simpleton! Don't you know? . . . Of course he didn't give me the books to read too early. And he told me many things. He said: 'Don't believe all those well-fed charlatans who talk of Heaven; all business is decided on earth.'"

After a pause the boy went on: "Look at that house

over there—the house where the piano is playing. In the same house underground there is poverty, nakedness, hunger, sickness. And in the room just above a ball is often going on.”

Meanwhile, millions of moujiks were puzzling their brains. How terribly hard it was for them to think!

Demian Bédney [Demian the Poor], the first proletarian poet of Soviet Russia, said: “From early age my brain of moujik structure was accustomed to wander along the path of guesswork; great difficulties and piles of books overcome! All classes in school passed! And yet no elasticity, no polish—no cutting of the water as with an arrow.”

Finally the poet laments that it will take not days but years to smooth the way to freedom.

The Revolution is getting nearer and nearer. Another poet wrote: “There is awakening hatred for ikons; hatred for their multitudes of heartless treachery. One moment more, and with a crash they will come down from their dark walls. And on the floor I will grind them with my evil heels, squeeze them with iron rings of sorrow!”

The Revolution, as everyone knows, began in the cities amongst the factory workers. What kind of people were these workers? It is greatly to our discredit that we know so little about them; for when all allowances have been made for differences of national character, we are bound to admit that the worker of Russia is a universal type, and that his environment in the factory is much the same as that of the workers in the factories of the West. The Russian worker has been given an opportunity of expressing himself; and he is well qualified to do so, for, in common with other classes of his countrymen, he possesses imaginative and artistic qualities of a high order. I do not believe that the English worker would write as he writes; but I cannot help thinking that the Russian worker says much that the English worker unconsciously feels and does not or cannot express. The literature of the Russian worker ought, therefore, to be of profound interest to those who sincerely

wish to understand the worker's life and point of view. Naturally, when reading it, full allowance must be made for revolutionary and artistic extravagance.

These proletarian poets do not sing of nature or of love. For them the world is the factory and the machine; the factory is the place where they spend their lives, the machine a passionate, living creature with whom they have united themselves. They tell us of a new race of iron gods, and their verse quivers with the heroism of muscle and is full of strong, healthy romance. How refreshing to escape for a while from the sex situations and stale romance of cushioned drawing-rooms!

Here are some typical lines written by one, Gastev:

"I have grown out of iron. . . . Iron blood is pouring into my veins. . . . I am bound with the iron of the structure. . . . I am growing steel shoulders."

In a later verse, the poet speaks of the steel rule of labour, of white-heat metallic blood, of iron thoughts, of iron and steel men "who have become impudent," and of "the whole structure trembling with impatience."

The same prophet scorns the idea that iron is cold and passionless. "Understand," he says, "that the dumb iron and the people are one. Our fate became the fate of iron. Machinery entered into us; the fight is an iron fight."

"Forget the sky, the sun and the tangled stars and unite with the earth. The earth is in us, and we are in the earth. We are born from earth, and to earth we shall return. The future world will be a machine, not creatures, not men. . . . The Cosmos will find its own head, its own heart."

The worker is represented as the creator of the world. "Nothing can limit our daring. We are the Wagners, the Vincis, the Titians, the Michael Angelos—the creative force and genius that built the whole world from the days of the Parthenon and the Pyramids," sang one poet, while another began: "I am a simple workman. My flesh and spirit have been kicked as though they were some crawling things. But I am a poet and a builder!"

And yet another thunders: "I'm forged from concrete and steel; my father was a faceless cosmic-builder. In

the womb of the factory and the heart of the bench I was born : I am the worker ! ”

Not only is the factory a place where the workers spend their lives, but the factory itself is a living thing for them. The factory sleeps and awakens ; its language is the language of the hooter, the syren and the whistle ; its scent the super-sweet scent of iron and oil. The machinery, too, is alive, very much alive, full of wonderment, power, melody and movement and sometimes, “ shivering with anger and groaning in a hoarse voice.” In place of poems to lovers and to flowers, we are given poems to machines and to separate parts of machines, to fires, furnaces and factories. In particular, odes to the glories of the crane are frequent. The crane is regarded as an heroic piece of mechanism whose strong steel muscles lift and dispose of weights at the bidding of strong, steel, heroic workers.

To these poets of the iron age all the factory is a fairyland.

“ Sparks spread like fountains. . . . Steel shavings wind themselves in endless spirals. . . . From the great hydraulic press is heard the tender music of the organ.”

Or again : “ Through gardens of iron and granite, along avenues of houses of stone, I came to the call of the victorious hooter.”

Another writer tells that whenever he goes to the forest he is followed by the shriek of factory whistles and the noise of machinery throbs in his ears. And another offers adoration to the machine, which he speaks of as the “ iron Messiah.”

The proletarians have acquired steel muscles ; because of the heavy toil imposed upon them they have become physically strong ; so strong that it is their very strength that forces them to revolt. Soon steel Bolsheviks will cover the earth.

Meanwhile what do the peasants think of machinery ? Said one peasant to another : “ How can you plough with a machine ? Why, a machine only goes on rails or in a steamer. It won't go in a field.”

And in one village (this is a true story) the peasants all agreed to put the tractor—the “ iron cow ” or “ trans-



atlantic beast" as they called it—in the Co-operative Society's storehouse, "for there, at least, it will be safe."

On the whole, the story of working-class life as told by the proletarian writers is a story of harsh existence, relieved only by tragedy, heroism and grim humour. Occasionally, they wander from the subject of the tyranny of master over worker and reveal something of the tyranny of worker over worker. The new beginner, they tell us, for example, is tortured with sneers because he does not know his job. Also they relate that life in the factory is often made a hell because of jealousy amongst the workers; and that the thieving of tools is of common occurrence.

To these human frailties, that of snobbishness must be added. Some of the younger workers put on fancy shirts before leaving the factory in the hope that they may be taken for clerks or mechanics.

Altogether one is led to believe that the steel heart of labour beats in a breast that is very human and bourgeois.

But we must not delay. The Revolution is approaching. All the hatred, jealousy and snobbery of the factory are forgotten; only the bourgeoisie can be guilty of these loathsome offences against their fellow men. Everyone is exalted; through bloodshed to brotherhood—this is the motto of the day.

These are hours of ecstasy and storm; of fear and fright, of meetings and speeches, of theses and books, of drunkenness and swearing, of fire and victory.

"We came to stamp on yesterday with boots nailed up with anger. . . . You may sigh or you may not sigh—all the same you will be crushed. . . . Let loose the red cock.\* . . . Handfuls of bloody minutes—all pages of the New Testament and Koran lived through. . . . Tartar evil days again! . . . Suffering is always holy. . . . There is love in blood. . . . The Red front is the all-world's line. . . . Long live the all-World Commune! . . . No one will save us. We must help ourselves. Personal

\* In the language of the peasant, "to let loose the red cock," means, "to set on fire."

life does not exist. . . . There are no tender people. . . . War became understood. . . .”

And Demian Bédney sang the chant of expropriation in these words :

“ Streets, palaces, canals, banks, arcades, shop-windows, cellars, gold, cloth, food, drink—all mine !

“ Libraries, theatres, museums, squares, boulevards, gardens, avenues, marble and bronze statues—all mine ! ”

Hopes ran high. Smoky huts were to be transformed into palaces. And from black ashes altars of happiness were to rise. “ We come to make the fields bloom brighter, not with miraculous holy oils, but with factory whistles.”

Iron men with iron blood in their veins had arisen to rule the earth. And these iron men had a robust contempt for “ starched business men from the club,” and for “ the clean public.”

The fleet had gone over to the Bolsheviks. No regard was paid to discipline. The younger sailors did pretty much as they liked. And the old sailors referred to them contemptuously as “ seedlings ” and “ ducklings ” who spent all their time holding meetings and muttering “ in principle ” and “ categorically.”

A decree was issued forbidding swearing in the Navy. “ Without swearing—well, a sailor simply isn’t a sailor—he’s filth,” protested an old sailor whom the young men would no longer obey. “ A decree, I know, is a decree,” he went on, “ but to do without swearing in our situation—well, it’s quite impossible. And what is a swear word, after all ? It’s not a weapon. You can’t kill with it. It only tickles the heart.”

“ As regards swearing, you are right,” replied the officer. “ I am bound to admit that. But all the same you must restrain yourself. Fresh winds blow. You can’t do anything but hold on.”

What is happening in the village ? The sun got up and crossed itself. And then it kissed the cross in the bell tower and said, “ God bless ! ” and began to work.

An old moujik is followed about by his pet cock.

"Take this egg and sit on it. I am not going to sit on it," he says. "It's a shame for a man to do woman's work, to bring up children. Of course—a hen's business, that's quite different."

After a pause he continues, "You don't seem very glad with my proposition. You don't look very proud. Is it because I propose to make you equal with a hen? . . . Don't you know that we have arrived at the time when a man is the same as a woman? . . . But straighten things out as you like, a woman remains a woman, and a hen will never be a cock, or a woman a moujik. Is that so?"

"K—r—r, k—r—r" answers the cock.

A detachment of "Whites" enters the village. At once the old moujik lifts the cock from the ground.

"What have you got in your hands—a cock? Give it to me for my dinner," demands an officer.

"What! . . . My only joy!"

"Shut up!"

The officer grabs at the cock. The moujik holds on by the neck; the officer drags at the tail; each pulls towards himself. And all the while the victim screeches.

Suddenly the officer severs the neck of the cock with one blow of his sword. Whereupon the old moujik falls to the ground with its bleeding head still in his grasp. The body of the bird remains with the officer.

"Petrack! Petrack! this bloodthirsty ruffian has murdered you. . . . Now take my head also—here it is. Chop it! Chop it!"

"Shut up, old crow!" shouts the officer at the top of his voice.

"You think there's nothing above you. The tree is high, but the sun is still higher," answers the old man. And then he begins to howl like a wolf.

Meanwhile the headless cock convulsively dances the *Kamarinskaya*.\*

After a while the old moujik gets up and wanders along the road, asking everyone whom he meets: "Have you seen the Reds?"

\* A Russian dance.

People are nervous ; they think that the Reds will hear what he is saying.

"Where are you going? Have you done with the Whites?" demands a voice.

"Have you got a spare rifle?" answers the old moujik.

"Yes; come with us to kill all the Whites."

The old man, equipped with a rifle, lies down and begins to shoot.

"Eh, what are you doing there? . . . shooting into the sky. Why, you're only wasting bullets."

"Wait, wait, children! I've tears in my eyes!"

"Why, old grandfather, you've killed an officer."

"Is it the one who slaughtered my cock?"

"Perhaps it is he."

"Oh, thanks be to God!"

The order is given to advance. A chorus of hurrahs, like the buzzing of bees, comes from the comrades.

The old moujik is in the front rank, running as fast as his legs will carry him. When last seen his beard was waving in the wind.

The Revolution is sweeping through the countryside.

Old women abandon their weaving. A youth with a red light arrives from the city, exclaiming, "We're fighting for the freedom of everyone!"

Says one shrewd old peasant woman, "You read 'Capital.' You don't make it. And, believe me, you never will."

Then the report comes that the Whites are approaching.

"Who stands for the Commune will hang on the cross!" is the poet's cry to the moujiks.

Times are a little quieter now. The landowners have been dispossessed.

"God is asleep. . . . Clean up the sky. . . . God has awakened."

"They say," remarks one peasant to another, "that that impudent barin (squire) went through all the Europes. Three foreign Emperors honoured him with medals. And what has happened now? God Almighty! Even I pity



him . . . tattered . . . worse than a plucked crow, but his eyes ready to swallow anyone. Not a bit humiliated ! ”

“ You dove, you slobberer ! Pity for him, indeed ! For this pity we had seven skins taken off us. . . . No, our brothers can’t weaken the reins. If they did those barins would all sit on us again and we would never be able to shake them off. . . . ’Twas said that the whole building was burnt down. Do you know what happened ? We couldn’t divide. People flew in from all around. One pulls it to himself—another to himself. It nearly came to a fight. So after that, to keep away sin, we decided to set the red cock on it. So no one got it—not they, not you, not me. But the barin’s house was a very good one. . . . And there’s the school—year after year goes by and we can’t repair it and put it right.”

One peasant is speaking of another. “ The man read so much that his brain went beyond his brain. He turned against God. He said there was no God. There you see the sad results of literacy. But grandfather—God give him health !—he knocked brains into him. He grabbed him by the hair and dragged him up and down, all the time repeating, ‘ You son of a bitch, and who, if not God Himself, made you according to His own image ? If there’d been no God, what would you be—an Ethiopian ? ’ . . . Yes, there’s lots of clay in our heads yet.”

In these tempestuous days there is little time for romance. Besides, the Communists despise love as it is understood by the bourgeoisie ; they wish the relations between man and woman to be quite different from those of the past. What form these new relations are to take they do not know. Their ideas on this subject, as on most of the problems of life, are cloudy. But all the while they have a feeling that love must be simple and free and yet grand, heroic and pure.

A red soldier catches a glimpse of another red soldier—a woman. Both are entraining for the front. He sees her again lying in hospital. No words pass between them.

Later she goes back to the firing line. And so does he. One day a bullet strikes her down. And the Red soldier laments, "Killed! What of that? Drops of blood shine as rubies on red banners. Great—eternal! Oh, how many youths must drink the drink of immortality!"

The Civil War is over. The task of building up Soviet Russia begins. A young Communist who holds an important post is pacing his room. There is a soft carpet on the floor and divans against the walls. Letters, dispatches, telegrams are constantly arriving.

The secretary is a woman of the bourgeois class. She is dressed up in silk and smells of powder and scent. Her shoes are of patent leather.

"Do you want me?" she asks softly.

"Devil, no, woman," he thinks to himself.

She is impatient to go into his room, and searches her own mind for some excuse which shall justify her in doing so. . . . After a while she boldly enters and begins to make up the fire.

"How nice it is in your room! May I sit down?" she says. He assents.

Then she sits down on a divan, spreading herself luxuriously and making a rustle with her silk skirt. At once he comes to her and lies down amidst the cushions. Soon he begins to feel a desire for her.

Suddenly she tells him that she loves him: "No one understands you. Only I do. You are young and I am young. You are full of revolutionary ardour: but in your interior you are not happy. You can't find anyone who sympathises with you."

These and other sweet words she coos in his ear. He feels that he is not in the presence of a human creature, but of a terrible sinister dynamo, trembling with passion. . . . Quickly flew the belting, roaring and attracting with a wailing squeal. Little hammers beat upon his temple. . . . And rings of blue wild fire dance in his eyes.

"This is absurd—quite absurd," he exclaims, rising suddenly from the divan, and striving to repress his emotion.

"Have I made a mistake?" she asks in a low whisper.

He sits in a chair and begins to smoke. After a pause he continues:

"I don't know whether or not you made a mistake. But I want to prevent you from making one. Believe me, I can't afford to succumb to careless passion. I can't do it and I mustn't do it. Is it for us such love? I wanted to stop you from making a silly mistake. From the depths of my soul I'm sorry for you. Of course I am not a saint, and all the stupid and vulgar passions that are felt by other people are not strange to me. But I have in me something which you will never understand—a feeling of class. It is the divine, eternal, powerful source from which I gather up all my strength and from which I drink all my highest and personal happiness. How it was born in me I do not know, but I remember that in a dirty and dimly lit underground cellar I lived with my mother, who was a washerwoman, and I looked through the window above at the feet of passers-by. Then as a ragged child, I understood that in this world there are beautiful people with shining new goloshes and dirty, hard, small souls. . . . And when the din and the hooter of the factory became my master, and all of us workers were united with greasy soot, I understood too that the day would come when there would be happiness for us black mugs. I found that out from comrades. And from books I learned also the path towards this happiness. It is not easy for us to take this path. There are lots of difficulties—lots of precipices—still in front of us! Lots of sacrifices will have to be made! And lots of mistakes will be committed! It is a long and tiring road. Sometimes we have a desire to lie down on divans and forget. But suddenly our spirits are aroused again by the cry of the working classes. This cry weaves for us wreaths of divine joys; and women then become as rubbish—nothing! To repress all our happiness, to forget it, to exchange it for soft feminine love—it's impossible. There's lots of sweetness in that chocolate, but it's strange to us. We're not used to it. It only upsets us in this hard struggle, and that's why we don't want it. And now I hope you will not be angry, and that you will understand how it is that I can't be your sweetheart."

## CHAPTER XLII

### EDUCATION : HOW REVOLUTIONARIES ARE MADE

THE Bolsheviks say quite frankly that it is upon the younger generation that they rely for the building up of the Communist State; the minds of so many of the older people, even among the proletariat, are saturated with bourgeois ideology and exhausted from the strain of the Revolution. Fresh forces are needed. At present the State functions solely because of bourgeois elements in its service; and the aim of the Government is to get rid of these elements as soon as possible and put in their place men of working-class origin, educated on Marxian-Lenin lines.

The Bolsheviks talk much about education; culture is, indeed, an obsession with them. What practical results have been obtained?

Eighty per cent. of the population of Russia are illiterate. In the early days of the Revolution, when enthusiasm for education was at its zenith, it was confidently expected that illiteracy would be totally eliminated within ten years. Of late, considerable apathy has set in. The illiterates amongst the adults resist rather than welcome education, and so it has been decided to concentrate attention mainly upon the rising generation. Since the Revolution illiteracy has increased rather than decreased. "It is colossal," remarked Mme. Krupskaya (Lenin's widow) recently, "and it is getting worse. The children are growing up as illiterates." At the end of 1924 M. Lunarchasky, the Commissar for Education, made a report from which the following is an extract :

"For the present, between the desire of the people for good education and the possibility of fulfilling it there is a great gap. The Government has municipalised elementary education, which means that the burden has







M. CHICHERIN.  
Commissar of Foreign Affairs.



M. LUNACHARSKY.  
Commissar of Education.

been shifted on to the shoulders of the local governments. But they are too poor, and have not the means for the support of the schools. In fact, in the rural districts the schools are regarded as a burden of which they must rid themselves as soon as possible. The result is that the peasants give practically no money for the schools. The school children are taught in totally neglected buildings, which are rarely heated, making it necessary for the children to sit in their overcoats during the lessons. There is a great scarcity of ordinary school necessities; for example, one lead pencil must be shared between ten pupils. The children have very few books, and many things must be memorised.

"There is an insufficient number of teachers: in short, there is a lack of everything. Being paid like beggars, the teachers are treated as such by the people, with the result that there has been a general flight from the profession. Most of those who remain in the teaching profession try to solve their economic problems by joining the Communist Party. Thus the situation is as bad as it can be. The number of schools and pupils is diminishing day by day."

And in August of 1926, in the course of an interview which he gave to a newspaper called *Soviet South*, M. Lunarchasky said that conditions had not improved. "The time has gone," he continued, "when we can speak of the gigantic achievement of the Soviet power in the sphere of education. . . . There is no hope in the near future of any advance in the education of the people." This failure is solely to be attributed to the poverty of the State, and not to any lack of educational enthusiasm on the part of the Bolsheviks. In 1921, the total number of pupils at elementary schools was 6,000,000, or 1,800,000 more than the total number of elementary pupils in pre-war days. But since then there has been a decline of two millions; popular education is therefore less widespread now than it was during the latter days of the Imperial régime.

The total number of children receiving a first and secondary education in Soviet Russia, with its population of one hundred and thirty millions, is less than the number of

scholars in elementary schools alone in this country, with its considerably smaller population. Education, moreover, is neither compulsory nor free. In the villages it has almost ceased to exist; in the towns, though widespread, it is in a deplorable state.

Bear in mind that the basis of all education in Russia is Marxian; that is to say, frankly materialistic and atheistic. Idealism is a word that has been erased from the Bolshevik dictionary. Mysticism is banned; science (and particularly economic science) is put upon a pedestal. For the Bolshevik, life is simple: most things are explainable, and those that are not now will one day be.

A professor or teacher who will not teach from a Marxian point of view is at once dismissed. History, philosophy, logic—it does not matter what the subject is, all have to be taught with a Marxian bias. It sometimes happens during a lecture that a student stands up to remonstrate with a professor, "That is bourgeois ideology; you must not teach us in that way." And the professor dare not make reply; he is completely under the control of the Communist students. In most of the elementary schools the teaching methods remain the same as they were under the Imperial *régime*. Instead of learning all about Julius Cæsar the children prattle about co-operation, and they read of the battles of barricades instead of the battles of nations. Marxian theories even form part of the training in the ballet school. And a director of one of the conservatoires remarked to me: "In teaching music we have in mind the proletarian conception. We don't want to produce great stars. They were all very well in the old days. The bourgeoisie went to concerts fashionably dressed, and pretended they could understand the difference between a Hoffman and a Smith. But it was a pose. We try to produce good, average musicians in big quantities—and no stars." Some time afterwards I met a young musician who complained bitterly that nothing had changed. "The old men won't give the young men a chance," he said.

But perhaps the Bolshevik ideas of education are best explained out of the mouths of the students themselves. Said a young university student to me in Leningrad:



“ We are taught that there is no God, that we descend from the monkey. A soul is not denied, but we are told that it cannot exist separate from matter. And when the body dissolves, the soul disappears too. History is taught from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the working classes became a force; we learn nothing of classical or Middle Ages history. . . . And we are instructed that all the reforms of Alexander II were not of the least importance.”

A second student told me the following story which later was repeated to me by several other persons: “ The Bolsheviks arrested an eminent ecclesiastic who at the same time was a surgeon of high reputation. ‘ You have made many post-mortem examinations. Surely you know that such a thing as a Soul does not exist,’ they said to him. ‘ Yes it is true,’ he replied, ‘ that I have often looked at the brain after death. But I never saw there either cleverness or spirit; yet both exist.’ ”

A third student remarked to me: “ One of our professors was dismissed because he denied the Marxian idea that genius was the result of social conditions, and said that social conditions were the result of genius.”

A fourth student related the following: “ One of my companions was asked by a professor: ‘ What would you do if the present *régime* fell ? ’ ‘ I would try to support it,’ he replied. ‘ You mustn’t answer that way,’ admonished the professor, ‘ you must say that it can never fall.’ Another student was asked: ‘ What would you do if the Government fell ? ’ ‘ Cry tears,’ came the ready reply. ‘ That is not enough,’ said the examiner. The student failed and was sent away from the university.”

In Leningrad an academy for preparing students to become propagandists of atheism was recently established. But a number of universities and many schools have been closed during the last few years; the Government had not sufficient money for their maintenance, and thousands of bourgeois students were dismissed. Here is an account of what happened at Yaroslavl, given to me by a student who had nearly finished his course:

“ The university in our town had been closed seven times

in four years. Imagine how hard it was to study in those conditions. Well, the other day it was decided to permanently close the university and establish in its place an agricultural institute. A meeting of students was called; a government official from Moscow acted as chairman. We were all very much alarmed at the prospect of the university coming to an end. During the discussion one student wrote a note to the chairman, using his left hand to conceal his identity.

“ ‘Will the Government let us go abroad to finish our studies?’ he asked.

“The chairman read the note and denounced it as a ‘piece of rascality.’

“Then a communist student got up and declared that the authorities were right, and proposed a resolution that the university be closed.

“ ‘All those against hold up their hands,’ said the chairman, making use of the usual Bolshevik formula.

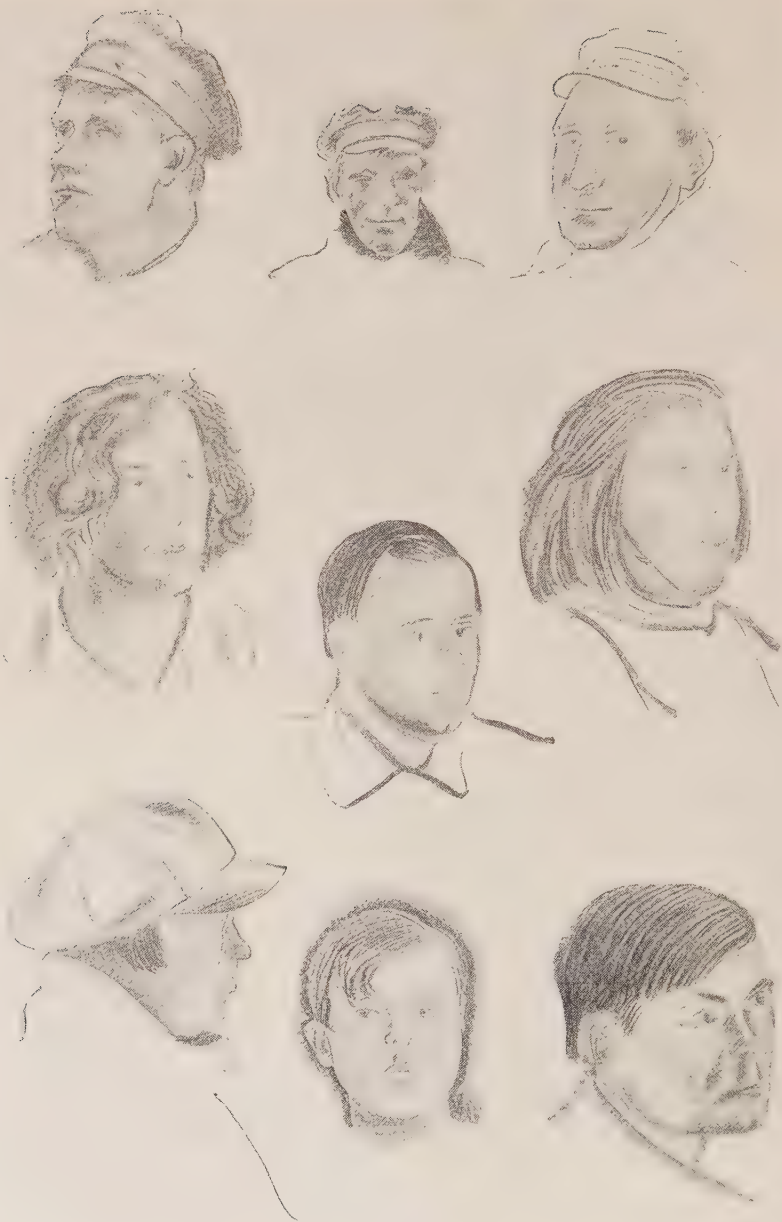
“No one dared to hold up his hand . . . a few days previously a professor and a number of students had been arrested.”

In the universities preference is frankly given to the children of the workers: and among the workers to the children of the Communists. The professors, as we have seen, have no souls of their own; the communist students are their masters. The Bolshevik leaders themselves complain that the professors are so terrified of these Communist students that they give them marks where they do not deserve any.

In order to prepare young workers for the university, the Government has organised special schools known as the “Rabochy Facultiet” (Workman’s Faculty), the students of which are called “Rabfaks.” From the “Rabfak” graduates are selected a number of promising young men who, after a three years’ course in political science, which means Marxian economics, become “Red Professors.”

The education in the Rabochy Facultiet is education at high pressure: in three years it is sought to accomplish what usually takes seven years in the middle schools. Upon the results obtained the whole future of Bolshevism will





TYPES OF PROLETARIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, KNOWN AS "RABFAKS."  
Drawn by a Bolshevik artist.



depend. For the intention is that the Rabfak shall be a new type of man fit to replace the dying bourgeois, when he is dead.

To save Communism from being swamped by the incoming tide of the newly-born bourgeoisie, the State machine must turn out Rabfaks in hundreds of thousands, and at great speed. It is a race against time. The Rabfaks must not be tempted by the so-called things of life; there must be no "human nature" about them. Once Rabfaks, they must always remain Rabfaks. Meanwhile the "old guard"—the sedentary revolutionaries who used to wile away their time in the cafés of Paris and Switzerland and talk of what they could do if only they had the power—are holding the fort; most of them are sick men now—neurasthenics and insomniacs, suffering from bad stomachs, weak hearts and disillusioned minds. There are too few of them, and each one is called upon to occupy several posts, and work day and night at a feverish pace. Besides, the bloodshed of the Revolution has left nightmarish memories with them, and the continuous oppression to which they all have to consent is nerve-racking. (Someone told me that Dzerzhinsky had five offices in one department, and that only his most intimate colleagues were aware in which office he was sitting.) It must be unpleasant for the Communists to know that most of the people always speak of them as "they," just as if they were foreign conquerors in the country. Is it any wonder that they are anxious about the future—anxious as to who will replace them?

Up to the present no one is satisfied with the result obtained in education. The professors declare that most of the Rabfaks are self-assertive, superficial, and incapable of expressing themselves intelligently; that only about 10 per cent. are able to get solid results from their work, and that many become "human tragedies," and leave the universities in despair before their course is finished.

Nothing is more tragic than the failure of these Rabfaks. Can it be that education is bound up with reflexology, and that, except in cases where unusual gifts are possessed, knowledge is inaccessible to all those who cannot boast of educated parentage? If this be true—and the

experience of Russia suggests that it is—then fate has dealt a cruel blow at the workers as a class. For myself I prefer to think that wrong ideas are held in Soviet Russia, as elsewhere, as to what is education, and that these wrong ideas are at fault rather than the worker's intellect.

The Government itself, in official statements, admits that at least half of the communist students are unsuccessful. Said Bukharin recently: "The tendency of teaching is Talmudic. Everyone learns the first volume of *Das Kapital* like a parrot. But if you ask a student, 'Where is Sweden?' he mixes it up with the North Pole."

The students have as much as they can do to keep body and soul together. The financial help which they receive from the Government is very small, and most of them, are compelled, between their studies, to undertake heavy manual work as porters, labourers, and even night-watchmen; while if they can get such light employment as pedlars they are considered lucky. Many of them dress in rags and are homeless. At night they sleep on the streets, in railway stations, or in the empty houses of summer resorts situated on the outskirts of the towns.

Whereas the workers in Moscow and Leningrad receive wages equal to pre-war amounts, professors are only paid thirty per cent. of their pre-war salaries, and they are forced to co-operate one with another in house-keeping in order to get a bare subsistence.

Even the communist professors are depressed by poverty and lose heart. In Russia agriculture is of the first importance; and there is much talk of the need for union between the town and the country. Yet here is a quotation from a recent official statement: "The worst academy is the Agricultural Academy. No means, no professors. There are supposed to be ten communist professors, but not one lectures there. They exist only on paper. . . . And it is the same elsewhere."

What happens to the successful Rabfaks when they leave the university? This is a vital question for the Revolution. Experience shows that these proletarian students do not go back to the factory; not unnaturally they prefer clean-handed occupations. Many are given government posts.

There is an over-production of technical men and physicians: no one wants to be a teacher or an agriculturist, professions of great importance for Russia, but unattractive to the rising generation.

Thus the Bolsheviks have not solved the problem as to who shall do the dirty work under Socialism. The students, as we have seen, in order to support themselves are forced to undertake menial work, and as a consequence they have no time or inclination for study. The proportion of failures is large, and those who succeed at once enter the intelligent professions, and are tempted to join the ranks of the new bourgeoisie. Discontent is growing amongst the students; and there have been revolts on a small scale. Many have been arrested. Many more are seeking peace of mind in a philosophy of idealism and simplicity—a tendency which the Bolsheviks declare is dangerous to the State and must be rigorously suppressed.

In all the universities and schools throughout Soviet Russia, just as in all factories, houses and institutions, there are communist germ-cells who appoint committees to keep a close watch on the teachers and the rest of the pupils: of these young Communists, or "Comsomols" as they are known in Russia, there are about half a million. These "Comsomols" do not understand very much about Communism. An official report says that 70 per cent. of them do not even know anything about the Constitution; also that many of them join the party because they are "too enthusiastic," others to secure a position, and many because of the facilities offered for sport and recreation. It may be true that they know little of the ideals of Communism, but they are very well versed in the "down with the bourgeoisie" side of it.

The Bolsheviks declare that the troubles of the rising generation are due to a multiplicity of diseases from which it is suffering. Bukharin said recently that it is sick from physical and moral degradation. The State is doing its utmost to restore the health of the youth. Sport has become popular; football is fashionable; and in the middle of the night one can see young sportsmen running like hares in the streets. Thousands of physical-culture circles

have been organised all over the country. Processions of men and boys, wearing shorts and stripped to the waist, and of women and girls in gymnasium costumes, with legs bared, are familiar sights; and often individuals wearing as little as is decently possible may be seen taking sun baths in parks and open spaces. And Meyerhold, the noted producer and a communist convert, drills his actors and actresses in biomechanics, using a whistle in the process, and is working out a suitable diet for them. He wants the artist to be a perfect man. What a strange mix up of "all the ideas" the Russian Revolution is!—the ideal of a Greek god revived to fit into a modern frame of Marxian culture—the worship of the body and the debasement of the mind. Is it thus that the re-birth of Paganism is to come about? Is it thus that the Scythian is to reappear on the steppes of Russia; dressed in a strip of red with a volume of *Das Kapital* under his arm?



## CHAPTER XLIII

PROLETARIAN CELEBRATIONS. MAY DAY IN THE STREETS;  
EASTER IN THE CHURCHES

WHAT is the Bolshevik *régime*?

Is it a dictatorship of the proletariat?

Or a dictatorship on behalf of the proletariat?

Or a dictatorship over the proletariat?

Certainly it is not the first.

I am inclined to think that it is a mixture of the second and third, with a strong bias towards the latter.

But, whichever it may be, the all-important fact to be ascertained is: Have the proletariat benefited, and to what extent? In other words, assuming that the means justify the end, has there been an end, or an approach to an end?

For the moment I will leave the peasantry out of the discussion. Strictly speaking, I ought not to do so; for the peasants number 85 per cent. of the population, and the Bolsheviks claim that their rule is just as much in the interests of the peasants as it is in those of the workers. But the turn of the peasantry will come later. Meanwhile, the question must be asked: What is the proletariat? From no quarter has an answer to this question hitherto been forthcoming.

At one time membership of the Trades Unions was compulsory; now it is said to be voluntary. But the word voluntary has a farcical meaning in Russia, and no worker, either hand or brain, in possession of his reason would dare to stand outside a union. When I was in Moscow in 1924 I managed to secure from the Trades Union Headquarters some statistics which I do not think were intended to reach foreign hands. These statistics showed how the five and a half million membership of the Trades Unions was made up. First, there were 2,386,382 members classified

under the heading of industrial occupations. That total included 297,436 agricultural workers who had their own union.

Next came transport and kindred services, which accounted for 1,102,934 members. Then under the description "members engaged in state, social and other establishments," followed a total of 1,520,663; this total included all civil servants and Government employés, both central and municipal. Finally, there was a total of 243,624 divided up as follows: members engaged in communal undertakings, 173,992; members employed in people's dining-rooms, 69,632.

An indication of the real strength of the Russian proletariat was disclosed under the first two classifications, industrial occupations (2), transport and kindred services. Adding together the two numbers here set down the resultant total was three and a half millions—no more.

And from that number had to be deducted brain workers, who probably accounted for fully half a million members.

The real Russian proletariat therefore did not total, at the very outside, more than three millions, women as well as men, two and a half million of whom were employed by the State in different nationalised enterprises, including the railways—not a large proportion of the population when it is borne in mind that the number of able-bodied men in Soviet Russia is sixty millions!

It was for three million workers that the Bolshevik *régime*, with its one and a half million state officials and employés, mainly existed, and that the experiment in socialisation was persisted in. For the peasants were individualists to a man, and were latterly left pretty much to themselves by the Bolshevik authorities.

Viewed from this aspect, the task of the Bolsheviks was not so stupendous as had been imagined. For they had only to make three million industrial workers comfortable and happy; or, to speak more accurately, two millions and three-quarters, for the remaining quarter of a million was composed of agricultural workers who were scattered in the country and belonged to the peasantry rather than to the proletariat. It ought not to have been impossible for one and

a half million officials to make two and three-quarter millions of workers contented; one official to a little less than two workers was not an ungenerous allowance for administrative supervision.

Since my visit to Moscow in 1924, the Bolsheviks claim that the Trades Union membership has increased by one million and a half. This total admittedly includes large numbers of workers who have little or no skill, and who are for the most part peasants forced to migrate into the towns as a consequence of the poverty prevailing in the villages. To what extent the bureaucratic elements have increased I cannot say; but the Bolshevik leaders in recent speeches have said plainly that officialdom is a menace to the very existence of the Proletarian State.

The workers have to shoulder this burden of bureaucracy. What have they gained in return? Are they any better off than the workers of other countries?

I frequently discussed these questions with the Bolshevik leaders.

"No; our workers are worse off—much worse off in the material sense than the workers of the rest of Europe, but their moral gain has been enormous. Remember how they were treated in the days of the Tsar—like dogs."

"Yes, I know that," I interrupted . . . "and it is all to the good that the Russian worker holds his head high to-day, that he has at last become an individual with some human dignity, and has ceased to be the downtrodden creature that he was. . . . But that is a comparison with his own condition in the past, not with that of the workers of other countries at the present time."

"Don't forget," was the rejoinder, "that the Revolution happened only nine years ago, and that we've had the Civil War and the blockade to contend with. The main thing is that the worker has got the power. He knows that the profits which he makes do not go to private enterprise, but to the State—his State, the Workers' State. Yes, these profits are small, but we're only beginning. The worker knows too that the Soviet Government is his own government. He can achieve anything. . . . The future belongs to him."

I also had talks with a number of typical workers. Here were some of the questions put to me: Do the English workers recognise that Lenin is the leader of the world's thought? Do you in England realise that the Russian worker is the most advanced in the world? Why don't you start a revolution in England?

I did not attempt to argue. I merely pointed out that England was largely dependent upon imported foodstuffs, and asked who would feed her in event of a revolution.

"Soviet Russia," was the ready reply.

"But you can't feed yourselves yet. . . . And, besides, even if you could spare corn for us, how would you get it to England? . . . England might be blockaded by foreign fleets just as you were."

"But, assuming England was not dependent upon foreign foodstuffs, would she make a revolution?" was the final poser put by one young Communist.

The propaganda among the working classes is intensive. In most of the factories there are clubs and Lenin "corners," containing libraries, chiefly composed of propaganda works.

The worker is idealised. Always he is the romantic hero of the drama, of literature, and of the Press: songs and poetry are composed describing his sufferings and his revolutionary exploits (the Revolution still lives in the atmosphere of barricades), and exhibitions are held composed exclusively of paintings representing his life and toil. Either he is depicted with bent back, crushed and broken, or as a splendid physical specimen, defiant of attitude and proud in expression—the very incarnation of virility.

Alternatively, the bourgeoisie are caricatured as "living corpses"—the men always double-chinned, wearing evening dress and top hats, the women with painted faces and half naked, all dancing the tango together, cheek to cheek, in a lifeless, mechanical fashion.

It is curious how old customs survive in new forms. For example, "Red" christenings take place at which infants are given names symbolical of the Revolution, and at which the mothers are presented with red shawls.



It has been discovered that the name Lenin spelt backwards gives the old Russian name Ninel, and other fashionable names for girls are Octobrina, and Yulevost (July 1st)—dates memorable in the Revolution—and Rem, made up from the first letters of revolution, electrification and *mir* [peace].

I have already mentioned that some of the best buildings of old Russia have been requisitioned as clubs for the workers. One evening I attended a ceremonial meeting at one of these clubs. The scene was extraordinary. At the back of the platform were arranged a number of banners made from rich material of red and gold; the speakers sat at a long table covered with vivid red, the chairman occupying a high ornamental chair decorated with the Soviet arms; at either side were tables, also covered with red, at which women stenographers sat; as each speaker stood up he was almost blinded by a fierce concentration of limelight from projectors held in front of him by a dozen men; in the background a bioscope operator was feverishly at work; and every few minutes the speeches were interrupted by the explosion of flashlight—two photographers were busy on the platform.

Fiercy speeches were delivered, not only by men and women, but by boys and girls. The chairman, in the course of his remarks, said that he hoped that before long all the bourgeoisie would be drowned in the filth of Moscow. Jeering allusions were made to Ramsay MacDonald and his Court dress. Busts of Lenin were presented to the club by groups of workers. These busts were handled with great reverence; it was evident that Lenin had become a "graven image"; an idol of proletarian worship.

At the close of each speech a brass band in the body of the hall played the "Internationale," and meanwhile everybody stood up and looked solemn. Then followed an interval, during which I drank a glass of tea in the company of some of the Communists who had been making blood-thirsty speeches. They were kind and attentive.

Afterwards young Communists performed what is known in Soviet Russia as a "spectacle."

Preceded by a band, a procession marched up the hall ; first, a "crowd" of people dressed in fancy costume to represent the workers of different nations—British, German, Chinese, Japanese, African, etc.—then young men stripped to the waist and wearing shorts, and young women in knickers ending well above the knee, and white shirts, and finally, a contingent dressed in drab costumes as Russian workers.

The workers of all the nations took up their stand on tiers of seats at either side of the hall ; the remainder of the performers proceeded to the platform, and with hammers, picks, ladders, and lanterns which they were carrying, went through a series of movements illustrating work in different industries. Sometimes, bending their backs and walking with slow steps, they processioned up and down, chanting with deliberate melancholy verse after verse about the sufferings of the proletariat.

Once or twice they flung their arms up and screeched ; this was the part where liberty was spoken of. The stage was dimly lighted, but in the background was an enormous and brilliantly illuminated representation of the sun, behind which stood three heroic figures : a working man, a working woman and a red soldier.

I happened to be in Leningrad at Easter-time, and on May the 1st, the principal feast-day of the Revolution. I had, therefore, a good opportunity of contrasting the Christian and the Communist festivals. On both occasions all the shops, hotels and restaurants in the city were closed for two whole days ; one could not get a meal anywhere, not even in the hotel where I was staying.

Long before Easter came the Bolsheviki urged the workers not to regard it as a holiday. But the workers refused to listen to them, and in some factories where meetings were held to discuss the subject, those present insisted upon priests being invited that they might hear "the other side."

Never were the churches so crowded as during this Eastertide. I stood from midnight until nearly five o'clock in the morning in one of the principal cathedrals of Lenin-

grad. So dense was the congregation that it overflowed into the streets outside; children climbed on to the sanctuary rails; women fainted, and had to be handed glasses of water. A conspicuous figure was a bare-footed old man with flowing white beard. Over his shoulder was a crimson velvet robe; and he leant on a silver staff, and, crossing himself ostentatiously, prayed in a loud voice. "An old humbug," someone whispered in my ear.

All classes were represented, but poor people, clad in rags, predominated. A few days later, doubtless many of these poor people would be walking in the May Day procession. Some Russians are quite capable of crossing themselves one minute and singing the "Internationale" the next.

The ritual was solemn, the vestments of the priests, shining with gold and silver brocades, were magnificent—no other word can describe them—and the singing of the large choir was an artistic triumph.

I stood in a privileged position within the sanctuary rails, whence I had an uninterrupted view. The congregation, as I have said, was dense. And to avoid accident, each one present held high the customary candle, the light of which fell upon an uplifted face. This restless sea of emotional faces, illuminated by hundreds of flickering candles, and faintly veiled with a mist of incense, was very impressive. At midnight the bells rang, and everyone cried, "Christ is risen!"

In the street outside some exuberant young Communists began to sing ribald, anti-religious songs, and fired one or two blank cartridges from revolvers. But there were no disturbances of any kind.

I returned to my hotel arm in arm with a Russian companion. Occasionally one or the other slipped, and we rolled together in the snow, but between the intervals of falling he related to me the following true anecdote:—

A young girl of the intellectual class was being examined by a communist professor.

"What is religion?" he asked.

"Religion is opium for the people," she answered, according to the book.

"And what is God?"

"God is a fiction."

"Good! Good! Your replies are splendid. You've passed," he said.

"Thanks be to God! Thanks be to God!" she exclaimed, crossing herself rapidly several times.

The May Day procession, which took place some days after Easter, was a monster affair; it occupied nearly the whole of the Nevsky, which is not far short of three miles long, before it passed into the big square outside the Winter Palace.

The atmosphere of a festival was completely lacking. Masses of black-garbed people wearing red favours moved slowly in detachments behind red banners on which were inscribed such mottoes as these: "Every cook must know how to govern the State"; "The Red Army, Fleet and Air Force are for the Service of the World," and numerous denunciations of Rumania's retention of Bessarabia. Grotesquely painted representations of the face of Christ were held up above the heads of the crowd; also grotesque masks of the Emperor and Empress were exposed to view on the end of high poles.

At intervals, groups of young factory women, wearing leather coats, short skirts, and with red handkerchiefs on their heads, marched past at a swinging pace, singing revolutionary songs in chorus. They were small of stature, and most of them had ill-shaped figures and embittered faces. Life had left its mark upon them.

On motor lorries "living pictures" were staged: a fantastic capitalist beating the head of a worker with a colossal hammer; bourgeoisie in top hats and evening dress, looking half-drunk and behaving in clownish fashion; a "bourjoui" hanging from a gibbet; a black coffin containing the corpse of the Second International; an Englishman in white helmet and white clothes, a Frenchman in military uniform, and an American wearing a morning coat, check trousers and white spats, sitting at a table beneath a palm tree, drinking champagne; and revolutionaries waving red flags between the bars of a prison surmounted by skulls.





MAY-DAY DEMONSTRATION IN LENINGRAD.  
Note the "bourjoui" in evening dress.



The procession was composed, not only of workers, but also of university students and middle-class employés in government departments, and artists in the state opera houses, theatres, and choirs. Large numbers were there simply because they had no other choice; attendance was compulsory.

In all government departments and institutions, as I have said, Communist fractions or germ-cells exist. These fractions took charge of the May Day arrangements, and informed all workers and employés that they must take part in the procession. In some instances they resorted to roll calls. Those who absented themselves ran the risk of dismissal from their employment. No wonder there were so many depressed-looking people in the procession; no wonder there was so little enthusiasm. Numerous banners flaunting words of freedom, bands of musicians playing revolutionary tunes—and a march of slaves!

Imagine the feelings of the bourgeoisie, particularly the old people among them, forced to take part in a demonstration the whole purpose of which was to expose them to ridicule and contempt. All Leningrad was out on the pavement, watching curiously. One could recognise at a glance the fallen bourgeoisie and aristocrats among the crowd; they stood there as quiet as mice, and some of them looked dazed.

There is a brave professor in Leningrad, whose name is Pavlov, and because of his world-eminence as an authority on reflexology he can say things which no other man in Russia dare utter.

Recently at a lecture he described some experiment he had made with dogs. One dog in particular won his admiration. For many days it refused to enter the room where the experiments were to take place; tempting food was set before it, but with no result. Finally it succumbed to extreme hunger and fell into the trap.

"The Russian people are like that dog," said the professor. Whereupon the Communists present at the lecture made an uproar.

On the day after the May Day demonstrations I

read the following placard posted up in one of the main streets of Leningrad: "Rise up, you damned slaves, slaves you are, and slaves you will always be!"

For some time the city was full of rumours: the Red soldiers did not take part in the procession because they were not reliable; militia walked by the side of the students, a number of whom had been arrested; a squadron of aeroplanes had intended flying over Leningrad as a signal for revolt, but the plot was discovered at the last moment.

"I'm sick of rumours," said one of my Russian friends. "Every May Day we hear the same stories."

The Bolsheviks would like to see only revolutionary holidays observed and Christian holidays done away with; but religious feeling has proved too much for them. In the calendar, which they have rewritten from end to end, they retain the names of the principal Christian festivals, but add events of proletarian significance which occurred on the same dates: in addition, they have created a number of holidays of their own, but all saints' days (of which there were many in Russia) have been abolished.

One morning the hotel in which I was staying was completely disorganised: not till 11 o'clock could any servants be found.

"What is the matter?" I inquired.

"Oh, to-day is the day of the Paris Commune."

"And what of that?"

"Everything is closed; it is a holiday."

Here are a few more holidays selected at random from the Bolshevik calendar:

January 1.—Repression of armed risings of Moscow workers.

January 6.—Rising of Spartacists in Berlin.

January 22.—Shooting of St. Petersburg workers, 1905.

March 12.—Fall of Tsar's autocracy.



## CHAPTER XLIV

### THE LIFE OF THE WORKER

ONE day I entered the dining-room of the only department store in the whole of Russia—a big shop in the centre of Moscow which was formerly the property of a well-known British firm, Messrs. Muir and Merelees, but which is now a state enterprise. And there I overheard a conversation between the waitress, a typical young Communist, and two American workmen who had been employed on some oil concession in Baku.

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“Back to America.”

“And why?”

“Because our wives and families are there.”

“Why don’t you bring them here? . . . Soviet Russia is the best country in the world for workers.”

The Americans laughed. “Why, in our country,” said one of them, “90 per cent. of the workers have their own motor-cars.”

She was taken aback.

“Hum,” she said. “Perhaps 50 per cent., not 90.”

A few weeks later I happened to be on the Volga. The Volga, formerly one of the great highways of commerce in Russia, is now a quiet river. Spacious boats are running under the Red Flag, but the life on board is quite different from that of former days: no music, no sociability, only gloom and suspicion. When the boats come alongside the quay everything is the same as it used to be, including the Volga boatmen in sackcloth and birch-bark shoes, singing their sad songs and perspiring under heavy loads.

“How much do you get?” I asked one of them.

“A rouble (2s.) a day. Sixty per cent. goes to the contractor, forty per cent. is left for us.”

Crowds of peasants in rags, carrying filthy bundles, crowded on to the boat at every stopping place. At night both men and women slept in the open air in the fore part of the ship. I leant over the rail from the first-class deck, and caught snatches of their conversation.

Two men were having a discussion about the co-operative societies. "I don't believe in them," said one of the peasants. "You can't beat a rich man. He'll get the better of all your co-operatives."

Standing near me was a working man who was the manager of a communist trading enterprise.

After a little while it became chilly. Soon a storm was raging; the rain came down in torrents; all the peasants huddled close together. I went into the saloon and drank a glass of hot tea. Shortly afterwards the manager of the communist enterprise did likewise. Then a young girl entered, and, seating herself at the piano, played revolutionary hymns. . . . I thought to myself that life had not changed very much; the peasants out in the storm, their rulers in the warm saloon.

When I returned to Moscow, I went to see some workers' sports. I sat next to a young man, who said to me, "Ah! don't you wish you had sports in England!"

The conversations with which I opened this chapter are, I think, a true revelation of the state of mind of the average Russian worker. As a consequence of propaganda he has come to imagine that he is much better off than the average worker in Western Europe. But man cannot live by propaganda alone.

To belong to the pampered and pamphleted class may be some consolation for poverty, but it is not everything. And the existence of the average Russian worker, in spite of his privileges, cannot be described as an altogether happy one. As I have already said, the cost of food is about twice as high as it was in pre-revolutionary days. And the cost of boots and clothing is incomparably higher. On the other hand, the charges for rent, light and water are low, but, as has been shown in the chapter dealing with housing, any charges, however low, would be excessive for such wretched accommodation as is usually available.

In Moscow and Leningrad wages are up to pre-war standard; elsewhere they are equal to about 60 or 70 per cent. of that standard. Generally speaking, a workman in Soviet Russia is fortunate if he gets £2 a week, and more often than not he has to be content with a wage that does not exceed nine or ten shillings weekly.

Most of the intelligentsia have been reduced to the same, if not to a lower, level. But the bourgeois specialists in the service of the State receive far more than is paid to the average worker; and the incomes of most merchants are also in excess of those of most workers. Thus the equalitarian principles which Lenin had hoped to see practised do not exist. Leaving out of consideration altogether other classes, among workers themselves wages differ according to the nature of occupation and degree of efficiency and skill. Piece work is widespread, and the greatest reward therefore goes to those who are the most energetic and productive. Consequently individual enterprise is the motive power of socialist mechanism.

Wages are not always paid regularly; at the present time various state undertakings owe large sums to their employés. And many of the workers are in arrears with their Trade Union contribution; at least 30 per cent. of those contributions were not forthcoming in 1925.

Most of the state trusts hand out credit vouchers to their workers which entitle them to obtain goods on the instalment plan at the various state and co-operative shops, the weekly payments being deducted from their wages. But the man who buys on credit invariably gets the worst of the bargain. And so it is with the Russian workers, who complain that inferior and highly-priced goods, and even goods that they do not want, are pushed on to them simply because they cannot pay in cash.

In these conditions is it any wonder that the Russian worker is producing far less than before the war? In most instances the output is only two-thirds of that of pre-war days.

An Inspector of Labour whom I met casually in the train remarked to me: "The younger workers have become completely demoralised. They do not put in at the most

more than six hours a day of real work. They work a little, and then stop and drink tea and talk. Old hands have a contempt for them, and say that they cannot work and haven't got any skill."

Workers frequently absent themselves from the factories, and in consequence much time is lost. I have dealt at length with this aspect of the labour problem in the chapter relating to the economics of the Soviet State.

The Bolsheviks are doing their utmost to encourage discipline in the factories; the Taylor and other American systems of production are being introduced. But so far the results are not good.

The late M. Dzerzhinsky, said: "The wages of the Russian workers are too low, not only to satisfy their growing demands, but even to secure for them the primary needs of life. But wages can only be increased if the workers produce more."

And Zinoviev said: "The question of wages is a sick question. Only the development of industry as a whole can satisfactorily solve the problem."

In spite of the fact that unemployment is growing at an alarming rate, the number of workers in state enterprises is on the increase. One explanation of this paradox is to be found in the diminished output of the average worker. That is doubtless due to a combination of circumstances: lack of will, energy or capacity on the part of the worker, imperfect mechanical equipment and inefficient management. There was always an insufficiency of skilled labour in Russia, and consequently the proportion of unskilled labour in the factories was excessively high.

This proportion has become much higher as a consequence of the Revolution. In the days of Militant Communism thousands of skilled workers were killed, or succumbed to disease. And thousands more escaped from hunger by migrating to their native villages, where they claimed a share of the land which was then being divided amongst the peasants. At one time the towns emptied. Later, when industry revived, they filled up again.

In her peasantry Russia has always possessed enormous reserves of raw labour. Whenever industry became



prosperous, the factories drew upon these reserves ; whenever trade slackened the superfluous workers drifted back to the land, from which they could always extract a subsistence. To-day, peasants are streaming into the town, and rest-houses have had to be opened near to railway stations, in order to shelter them. Despite the expropriation of large estates, there is an insufficiency of land for the growing population, and therefore large numbers of young peasants are forced to leave the village and search for a livelihood elsewhere. But industry cannot absorb all these newcomers. Consequently the number of unemployed is considerable, certainly not less than one and a half million, and probably much more. When I was in Russia people slept all night outside the Labour Exchanges in order to be first in the queue in the morning.

To cope with unemployment the Government has devised no original measures. It has merely followed the example of capitalist countries and introduced a social insurance scheme. To the fund created under this scheme the worker subscribes nothing ; the sole contributors are the employers—that is, the state, co-operative and private enterprises. The unemployment benefits are extremely low : the maximum is 19s. per month.

Even this pittance is not always forthcoming, for the insurance contributions are hopelessly in arrears. It is the state undertakings that are the worst payers ; next come the co-operative societies. Private enterprises are the least indebted of all. Taken as a whole the fund permits of the regular relief of no more than 15 per cent. of the unemployed ; the rest get nothing.

But rent, which at all times in the case of the workers is merely a nominal sum, is wholly remitted during periods of unemployment, and reductions are also made in the charges for water and lighting. During incapacity from sickness or accident full wages are paid. For pensions there is no age limit ; incapacity is the sole qualification. Here again the sums paid are low, varying from 14s. to 20s. monthly, but, as with unemployment benefit, they are not always forthcoming. Medical aid is free.

With the present prices in Russia no man could keep

body and soul together on the small benefits payable under the state insurance scheme. Consequently many pensioners and unemployed are forced to become beggars.

Yet when we reflect upon the condition of the workers in the days of the Tsar, we are bound to say that a social insurance scheme, even on so poor a scale, is a great advance for Russia. Concerning unemployment, the Communist leaders have been driven to the same conclusions as the statesmen of other countries. "Only in the development of production," said Zinoviev, "can a solution be found; all other suggested remedies are palliatives."

The labour laws do not differ in principle from British labour laws, but in practice, owing to the extreme poverty of the State, the workers get small material advantages.

An eight-hour day has been established. But it is not always observed. An official report made to the Central Committees of Trades Unions shows that in 1925 the average length of the working day was seven hours. Resort to overtime was of common occurrence; and as a consequence 16 per cent. of the workers of Russia proper worked in reality a nine-hours day, while in the Ukraine as high as 30 per cent. of the workers worked from nine to nine and a half hours daily. It is laid down in the law that miners shall only work six hours and workers in other dangerous occupations seven hours daily. But in the Donetz basin coal-mines the underground men work on the average from seven to eight hours daily, and sometimes even as long as nine hours.

The official report from which I am quoting attributes the prolongation of hours beyond the limit prescribed by law to the following reasons: (1) The shortage of houses and the deplorable state of such accommodation as is available, as a consequence of which it is not possible to employ larger numbers of men; (2) the lack of skilled labour; (3) the desire of the workers to increase their earnings by payments for overtime. In 1925 a ten-hours day was the rule in many factories.

Workers' control in the factory has been abolished. The workers, through their committees, can demand full state-



M. SMIRNOV.  
Commissar of Agriculture.



M. SCHMIDT.  
Commissar of Labour.





ments as to the financial position of any undertaking, and upon these statements wages are regulated. But they cannot interfere in the management. Strikes are allowed.\* The least sign of agitation against the Government is rigorously suppressed. Lock-outs are prohibited.

The management of a factory may discharge, but it cannot prosecute any worker. Cases of incapacity or continuous negligence are exceptions to this rule. Such cases must be brought before a body known as the Conflict Commission, composed of representatives of both sides, which determines all differences arising between employers and employed.

Should an individual be adjudged inefficient, he is discharged without a penny of reward; a man who does injury to machinery through lack of skill or carelessness may also be so dismissed. In practice, the Bolsheviks have little sentiment for incapable workers.

A minimum wage of 3*s.* 6*d.* weekly has been established, but in all industries this minimum has been exceeded. Compulsory work has been abolished, but it can be re-established in time of national danger or misfortune—a somewhat elastic term.

Such are the main features of the Soviet labour laws.

It should be added that there are no fewer than 12,000,000 persons (including 20,000 women) seriously wounded and otherwise disabled as a consequence of the Great War and the Civil War, and that most of these get a little financial assistance from the State. Towards this purpose the State derives some revenue from a novel source—a tax on frivolous plays and films.

The regulations for women workers are of an enlightened character. If a married workman dies, the widow, if she has a young child, is paid a pension until the child becomes of age; if she is forty years of age the pension is for her lifetime, unless she elects to take employment. An expectant mother is granted leave of absence eight weeks before and eight weeks after the birth of a child, and all the while is

\* This only refers to strikes organised by Trades Unions; but as the Trades Unions are under the control of the Communist Party, legal strikes are rare. Unauthorised strikes have frequently occurred.

paid her full wages. Other privileges which take into account sex disabilities are granted to her. But in this, as in all other spheres of social welfare, extreme poverty defeats the good intentions of the State. Nearly half the women workers are unemployed, and many of them receive little or no relief.

In order to increase the opportunities for work the laws which prohibited the employment of women at night and on heavy work have lately been relaxed.

Large numbers of women have been driven to seek employment in domestic service. At one time it was considered degrading to be a servant. "Let the 'bourjouié' do their own dirty work!" That was the cry in the early days of the Revolution. Now if the "bourjouié" do their own work because they are too poor to engage servants, it is said of them that they are "not ladies" or that they are "stingy."

To anyone who has read the facts which I have related the question will no doubt occur: What tangible benefits does the worker get from the Soviet *régime*? If he is out of employment, hardly any at all. But if he is in employment he is able to enjoy certain amenities and privileges. The factory is a community unto itself. A factory committee jealously guards the interests of the worker, and the enterprise has to contribute towards any expenses that may be incurred for this purpose. A factory may contain several, if not all, of the following institutions: a club, or dining-room, where simple meals at moderate prices can be obtained, a *crèche*, a workshop and schools where children are taught a trade and given a general education. Outside the factory the workers have their own clubs, which are often located in the best buildings of the town, and a large number of palaces and houses formerly occupied by the wealthy classes are now used as rest-houses or sanatoriums for the workers and peasants. Preference is given to workers' sons and daughters in admission to the universities. And, finally, a number of free or half-priced seats are reserved for workers in the theatres.

It is true that Communists are mainly selected for the enjoyment of all these privileges, and that the number of

workers who are able to take full advantage of them is relatively small. The beds available in the sanatoriums do not number more than 3,000, and the proportion of workers who can gain free admission to the theatre during any month is little more than one-fifth of the whole total. But the fact that the workers and peasants are the privileged class has undoubtedly a great meaning for them. To lounge about in the palaces and halls of the mighty ones of former days, and to be told that "Here were held the orgies of your rich oppressors," is a pleasing experience.

On one occasion a worker entering his palatial club from the muddy streets of Moscow was told to take off his goloshes. "We must have some culture," said the presiding official to him.

"What—take off goloshes! What next! It's an old bourgeois prejudice!" he answered.

With what curious feelings many peasants wandered through the Emperor's palaces in the Crimea, whither they had been sent for a rest cure, and how, amazed at their own boldness, they touched the brocaded chairs, and sat down on them again and again.

Often the peasants are distrustful of the Government's benevolence. They cannot believe that it is capable of having good intentions towards the people. It is sufficient for a proposal to come from an official quarter for suspicions to be awakened. At once all the moujiks scratch their heads and say: "There must be something behind this."

The following amusing story taken from the Bolshevik journal, *Poverty*, is characteristic of the attitude of the peasants towards those who rule them.

It was late. The village was in darkness and most of the inhabitants were asleep. There was a light in the room of the village Soviet, where the President was trying hard to make out the contents of an express letter which had just been handed to him.

"How difficult it is to live in this world without a secretary," he remarked to another moujik who acted as messenger to the Soviet. The secretary, who was regarded as a man of some learning, was absent on a fortnight's holiday.

"How is it possible to get through such an express paper—devil take it?" continued the President in an angry tone.

Then after a pause he went on: "It is a demand for a peasant. What he is wanted for, I can't say. Only unknown words are written here, nothing else."

The messenger, desirous of helping the President out of his difficulty, suggested that all the members of the Soviet should be called.

"Yes, evidently we must do that; then we can all read the letter together," answered the President. "It's a terribly strict anathema," he exclaimed. "Anathema" is a word much used by peasants in Russia.

Soon the Soviet had assembled. Some of the members wore only underclothing; others came in fur coats and top-boots. All were sleepy and were scratching themselves and yawning.

The President remarked: "Ah, comrades! again we've got trouble on our heads. It's an order to send a moujik at once to Vic" [Volost Executive Committee].

"And what for?" asked the blacksmith.

"In that is hidden the whole matter," replied the President, "If a moujik was required for work—for paid work—I could understand it. But just to deliver a live man—and where and what for—nothing is mentioned. Perhaps he's going to be sent to prison for our general guilt."

"Read it over again more deliberately," requested several members.

The President bent over a piece of paper, and read out these words very slowly: "It is prescribed that on receipt of this message, in accordance with the decision of the Village Soviet, one peasant shall be chosen and delivered to Vic for the purpose of being sent to the Crimea, there to remain in the cure-place, Livadia, for one whole calendar month."

"What is it—the Crimea?" asked the blacksmith.

"The Crimea is the Crimea," answered the President.

"I heard something bad about the Crimea," interrupted a peasant, "It's a place where they send people to sit for a long while."



"Everything is possible," exclaimed the President. And then he added: "Ah! if the secretary were only here he'd master it. And now we've all got to sit and guess for ourselves!"

"Yes," sighed all the moujiks together.

The President began to read over the paper again.

"To remain in the cure-place—the cure-place," he said. As he spoke, an angry expression passed over his face.

"And what is a cure-place?" asked a moujik.

"Ah! only cholera knows that," answered the President with a laugh, "But anyhow a man from our village must sit there for a whole month. That is all it says. And we must send him at once."

"Must he take his own food—or what?" asked the blacksmith.

"Also not known."

The Soviet thought, disputed, and at last decided.

"We can't do better than send the old man, Ivan Ivanovitch. He's a live man—that's what they want—and yet he can't do very much work for them," said the President, announcing the decision of the Soviet.

"And if he dies we shan't be particularly sorry," remarked the blacksmith. "For all the same he sits now on the neck of the Mutual Aid Society."

"Yes, that's right!" exclaimed everyone.

"Let him follow his destined path. He's lived ninety years. Yes, the Soviet will send for him. We will try not to frighten him. But we must show him the order of Vic. . . . Now lose no time. We must act. . . . And God go with him."

The President concluded with these words: "We've fulfilled the order correctly, and haven't lost anything. So everything has ended well."

The interests and privileges of the town workers are in the keeping of the Trades Unions. It is the Trades Unions (working through the Factory Committees) which select those who are deemed to be worthy of tickets at reduced rates for the theatres; or those to be sent to sanatoriums or rest-homes. And it is the Trades Unions who

nominate candidates for Government posts, who choose students for the universities, and who, generally speaking, supervise the workers' education. For this latter purpose they levy a contribution upon the workers' wages and also upon the enterprises in which the workers are employed.

But who are the Trades Unions? The Trades Unions are in reality the Soviet State, just as the Third International is the Soviet State. They are controlled by a powerful bureaucracy, which is dominated by members of the Communist Party. And this bureaucracy is served by a vast army of informers organised into communist cells or fractions, which are present in every factory and enterprise. Thus it is not only the enemies of the proletariat who are vigilantly spied upon; the proletarians themselves, too, are distrusted by a Government which claims to exercise a dictatorship on their behalf. Whenever benefits are distributed it is naturally the Communists amongst the workers who get the preference; in this way a privileged class has been created; and, as with all privileged classes dependent upon political favour, its fidelity is to power rather than to principle.

## CHAPTER XLV

### LIFE IN THE VILLAGE

The year doesn't matter,  
The land's not important,  
But seven good peasants  
Once met on a high-road.  
From Province "Hard-battered,"  
From District "Most Wretched,"  
From "Destitute Parish,"  
From neighbouring hamlets  
"Patched," "Barefoot," and "Shabby,"  
From "Harvestless" also  
They met and disputed.  
Of who can in Russia  
Be happy and free.

THE population of Soviet Russia numbers between 130,000,000 and 140,000,000 people; of that total 85 per cent. are peasants. It is important therefore to find out how the peasants live and how they think; for it is they who are the masters of Russia's destiny.

When I was in Russia I visited many villages in the neighbourhood of Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev, and also made a prolonged stay in several villages on the Volga, in a region where the great famine had raged. I talked with hundreds of peasants, and have since studied numerous documents and books bearing upon the present condition of the Russian village.

In 1925, for the first time since the Revolution, the harvest was a fairly good one. The Bolsheviki asserted that agricultural production had reached 70 per cent. of the pre-war amount. But two circumstances prevented the peasants from reaping any considerable advantage. In the first place, the quality of the production, always well below Western standards, was much worse than in pre-war days. And secondly, the State, owing to the backwardness

of industry, could not supply the peasants with anything like a sufficiency of manufactured articles. Consequently they were offered no inducement to part with the fruits of their labour, and the plans for the export of large quantities of grain collapsed.

In the previous year, 1923-4, the harvest was only moderate, and therefore very little grain was available for export, while in the year preceding that, 1922-3, the prices of manufactured goods were so high, and of agricultural products so low, that little interchange between town and country was possible.

It has to be borne in mind that the population is increasing at the rate of two millions yearly. Already, only nine years after the Revolution and the expulsion of the landlords, there is a shortage of land in some areas. Peasants are flocking to the towns in large numbers in search of employment that does not exist, and it is estimated that to relieve the pressure of over-population six million people will have to migrate to Siberia and elsewhere.

The facts which I have just related will, I think, explain why the lot of the peasants is so wretched. Their life was never a happy one. In 1910 Tolstoy wrote: "Half the Russian people live so that for them the question is not how to improve their condition, but how not to starve." To-day there are twenty million peasant households in Russia, and the Commissar who had charge of relief work told me that of these fully ten millions were in urgent need of help. It has been calculated that the peasantry as a whole is 40 per cent. less well off than before the war, which means that they are badly off. This is easy to understand. Before the war one milliard poods\* of grain were exported annually; to-day the total exported is much less, and in some years hardly any grain has been exported at all. Then it is estimated that by hiring out their labour in pre-revolution days the peasants could earn a sum approximating to £50,000,000 yearly from the landlords. The poorer peasants still have to hire out their labour to the rich peasant, but the reward they get is not to be compared with what it was in former times—and it was always a miserable pittance.

\* 1 pood = 36.11 lb.



To ascertain the true economic consequences of the Revolution in the village, regard must be paid to the facts of history. It must be borne in mind, for example, that before the Bolsheviks seized power, and the peasants the land, Russia had already become a nation of smallholders. For fifteen years or more the land had been passing from the hands of the large owners, and when the Revolution came nearly 90 per cent. of the arable surface of European Russia was in the possession of small peasant proprietors. Of these peasant proprietors, 85 per cent. were steeped in poverty, and themselves consumed what little they produced.

Owing chiefly to the lack of communication and the inadequacy of the home market for agricultural production due to the retarded state of industry, agriculture remained on a primitive level. Whereas in Europe the tendency is for small holdings, intensively cultivated, to yield the largest returns, the reverse is the case in Russia; there, the largest holdings give the largest returns. Here we have one reason why so spacious a country as Russia is considered to be over-populated. Judged by the amount he produces, the average peasant occupies an excessive allotment of land. And it has been calculated that he is engaged not more than 40 per cent. of his time in actual agricultural work. The Revolution has not modified the situation. In the redistribution that occurred the wealthier peasant as well as the big landowner sacrificed land. But the lot of the poor peasants, who made up 85 per cent. of the total, and who vegetated rather than lived, has not changed for the better. It is those peasants who managed somehow to secure fairly large holdings of land (above four dessiatines) \* who can show increasing returns. Thus three conclusions may be reached:—

(1) That the Revolution has not added materially to the amount of land available in European Russia.

(2) That the majority of the peasants remain steeped in poverty, and that in the country, as in the town, inequality survives.

(3) That the improvement of agriculture is dependent upon the development of a market for its products. This

\* 1 dessiatine = 2·7 acres.

development can only come about as a consequence of the expansion of industry.

The Bolsheviks have persistently laid stress upon the need for union between the town and the country. Lenin said: "Our Republic depends upon this: Will the peasant go with the workers or with the new bourgeoisie?" Up to the present there are little signs of the desired unity. The peasants are jealous of the workers who, they say, get all the privileges. Some little while ago the Bolsheviks began a movement called "Face to the Village!" But the trouble is that no one wants to live in the village; not only officials, but also doctors, agrarians and traders are reluctant to go there. And this is not at all surprising; for at present the condition of the Russian village is not much better than that of a Kaffir settlement. Nowhere does one see any serious evidence of that culture which the Bolsheviks pretend has become so widespread.

In the larger villages, situated near to railways or to rivers, manifestations of the Soviet power are discernible. I stayed in one such village for some while. The local officials, consisting of two young workmen, both members of the Communist Party, received me pleasantly enough. To all my questions they answered evasively, not because they desired to deceive me, but simply because they were ignorant of what was going on around them and of the life of the country into which they had been accidentally thrown. I could plainly see that they had no contact with the peasants over whom they ruled. Wherever they went they were the objects of unfriendly glances, and several peasants with whom I spoke alluded to them as "scoundrels and swine."

One evening I was invited to an entertainment organised by the local Communists. It was to take place in a little hall at the remote end of the village. Rain had been falling all day, and the roads were knee-deep in mud. When I reached the hall only the two officials were present; a little later several young people arrived; and after them the district magistrate came. We all sat on a bench and talked. Soon it became dark. Someone brought in a lighted candle.

One hour, and then another, passed by. Occasionally voices and a little scuffling were heard from a room near the empty platform. But no more people came to the hall, and there was no sign of the entertainment beginning. For a long while we went on talking in the semi-darkness. The usual questions, which I had so often had to answer before, were put to me: When will there be a revolution in England? Do you realise that Lenin was the leader of the world?

I glanced at my watch. It was after midnight. "How long will it be before the entertainment begins?" I asked.

"Soon, very soon," was the answer. I sat patiently for another hour and then, begging to be excused, I took my departure. It was after one o'clock in the morning. When I left, the hall was still in darkness, and, save for the half-dozen Communists with whom I had been conversing, quite empty. On another occasion I visited the local Peasants' and Workmen's Club, a gloomy, dilapidated building, which was deserted.

Later, I went to a neighbouring village, which was also the headquarters of a Volost or larger administrative unit. I proceeded at once to the offices of the local executive committee, the Ispolkom, as it is called, which were situated in a long, wooden hut. There I found a young man reading the *Pravda*; it was the first occasion on which I had seen a newspaper in the hands of a peasant. He suggested that I should await the arrival of the President of the village Soviet. Soon the President came in; he was a man with a remarkably fine head, and his face was thoughtful and intelligent. Had he been educated he would have risen very high. Of this I felt certain. I said something to him of this nature, and in reply he shrugged his shoulders and said: "It's too late now." But the compliment caused him no embarrassment.

One by one more peasants arrived; soon I was the centre of the crowd. Amongst this crowd was the Secretary of the Soviet, whom the President took aside and engaged in whispered conversation. Immediately he became serious and left the room, whereupon the President turned to me and said: "He invites you to take tea at his house."

After that we all talked together for a while. To have inquired of them as to the welfare of the peasants would have been absurd. Their appearance told me all that I desired to know. They were dressed in rags, and were emaciated and sickly-looking. Picking up the *Pravda* that was lying on the table in front of me, I remarked that I supposed that a newspaper was common in the Russian village of to-day. The President smiled, "We don't see one very often," he said. Soon a messenger came and announced that tea was ready. And then we all walked along the village lane, and crowded into a little room in the Secretary's house. The tea, made from carrots, had an excellent flavour; somehow or other the host had managed to collect and boil twenty eggs for me, and he was much distressed when he found that I could eat no more than six. Throughout the whole proceedings the President sat in a corner, and said not a word.

The young man whom, on my arrival at the Ispolkom offices, I had found reading the *Pravda* now took the lead in asking questions. I learnt afterwards that he had been in the Red Army. Not only his questions, but those put by other peasants, were of an intelligent character, and were directed towards finding out labour conditions in England. In particular everyone was anxious to learn when the revolution would take place in England. Several peasants remarked that they knew perfectly well that the English workmen were the most self-respecting and the most enlightened in the world. Afterwards some of them began to complain of their own lot.

"We get 30 lb. of corn per dessiatine from the land; and of that 6 lb. goes for the taxes, and as most of us haven't got a horse, we've got to pay away another 11 lb. for the hire of one. And we've hardly got any cattle. And so we're short of manure, and the land is poor. We've got sufficient land, but it won't give enough. In the old days we could do a little marketing and make some money that way. We could buy some corn, or butter or eggs, and sell them in the towns. But now, before you can sell anything, you have to take out a licence and pay a turnover tax in advance, and we can't afford this. And so we've got



no money, and can't buy anything at all—no cloth, no boots, no implements—nothing.”

“Would you like to have the landlords back again?” I asked.

A loud chorus of “No!” and laughter was the answer to my question.

And then one of the peasants remarked: “But Mr. — was not a bad man.”

“He was an Austrian,” added another.

But it was only when I travelled some distance from the Volga that I realised how wretched was the life of the peasants. The man whose carriage I hired had been a well-paid pilot on the river in the old days; now he was an *isvoschik* and glad to earn a rouble or two. We passed a number of properties which had belonged to landowners in Tsarist times. The big houses were empty and falling to pieces. No one wanted to live a lonely life in them. The peasant preferred his hut in the village.

The gardens were overgrown, neglected and deserted; the sight was depressing. One recalled the literary descriptions of life on the old Russian estates, and at the same time imagined how grey this life must have been, and how all the people must have talked like Tchekhov's characters.

In the villages the misery was appalling. In some instances no sooner did the peasants catch sight of our carriage than they left their work in the fields, and all rushed out to meet us. And at once they began to pour out their troubles.

The visit of a stranger to the village is a rare episode; and should one happen to pass their way, the peasants naturally desire to tell him of their plight.

It was the usual story that I had heard in all parts of Russia: “Exhausted land, little manure, few horses, few cattle—no money.”

The little crowd of men with whom I spoke made a picturesque group. Most of them carried wooden rakes or forks, upon which they leant. The framework of their physique was superb; but their bodies were unnaturally thin. It seemed to me that every one of them was possessed of dignity. Perhaps it was their beards which were largely

responsible for this impression; beards invariably lend dignity to those who wear them.

Some of the peasants had strikingly intelligent faces, the faces of professors or apostles. Their appearance reminded me of an old engraving I had once seen entitled "A Band of Early Christians." Their feet were wrapped in rough linen cloth, and they wore bark shoes, trousers of odd patched material, and jackets of rough linen, resembling sackcloth, which were held together by a rag wound round their waists.

"The taxation is terrible. . . . The Government strangles us. Look here!" said one old man.

And as he spoke he flung open his coat and exposed his bare, sunburnt body.

The other peasants laughed aloud at this gesture.

What struck me at once was the utter helplessness, the utter loneliness of this little group of men and their families, isolated in the vast expanse of the Russian steppe.

If nothing came up from the earth on which they were standing, if the crops failed again as they had done so often before, then many of them were doomed to perish.

"What do you eat?" I inquired of one of them.

"Black bread and potatoes."

There were no Communist officials to be seen in these remote villages. Not that their presence would have made any difference. The peasants could not live on pamphlets and propaganda. I thought of the young officials whom I had met on the Volga, and who had been so anxious about the welfare of British labour.

Next morning I went for a stroll with some of the peasants. We passed the church, the jewel of the Russian village. Its dome was painted a bright blue, and at the entrance was an image of Christ—a Byzantine Christ—austere and resigned.

A funeral was to take place that day; there was an open grave in the churchyard. A peasant drew my attention to it and remarked: "Yet some clever people say that there is no God."

A service was going on. We peeped inside the church, which was crowded with women wearing spotless linen

dresses and red handkerchiefs on their heads. Some of them had babies in their arms, and little children clustered round their feet. . . . The Revolution seemed very far away.

Afterwards I continued my journey. Whenever I came to a village I made a stay there, and always entered some house and rested awhile. As soon as I crossed a threshold a strange picture was presented to my view. Here is a typical scene: The only furniture in the room is a rough wooden table and a bench; the sacred ikon in the corner is dirty and disfigured; a few cheap German trinkets, chipped and broken, repose on a shelf, together with a clock which has stopped. On the wooden floor, blackened with the filth of years and littered with the husks of sunflower seeds, half-naked children with pale faces crawl about on all-fours. Women sit at spinning wheels, lending a note of picturesqueness to the scene of squalor. Two lightly-clad men with bare feet sit on a bench. They are young men, but look quite old, for their faces are parched and wrinkled. No one shows the least interest in my coming. The women do not look up. And the men sit stock still. It is a ghostly group; all who compose it might well be corpses.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### WHAT THE PEASANTS SAY AND THINK

LENIN's original theory in regard to the peasantry may be summarised as follows: The equalisation of land tenure was in the nature of a bourgeois, democratic revolution, through which the peasantry must inevitably pass to socialist demands. For them, as small producers, it was the ideal form of capitalism. But only through experience could they be led to discard it. Meanwhile, all the resources of a Workers' State must be directed towards their proletarianisation.

"The critical point is," continued Lenin, "whether we shall be able to proletarianise the peasantry before they are able to organise themselves against us. Their numbers are overwhelming and they could swamp us. This conversion of the peasants can only be carried out by electrification and tractorisation—thousands and thousands of tractors must be introduced. Meanwhile, the Proletarian State promotes a bitter class struggle between the poor and the rich peasants, and seeks an alliance with the middle peasantry, who are not the enemies of Socialism, but who will only come into the Socialist camp when they see sound and unmistakable proofs that such a course is absolutely necessary. It is towards communal tillage by gradual stages that the Soviet State is systematically moving. Communes and Soviet farms are being created."

So much for Lenin's theory. And now as to practice. The class war in the village had no other result than to deepen poverty and spread chaos. No progress worth speaking of has been made with what the Bolsheviks call the proletarianisation of the peasantry. Soviet farms and other forms of communal tillage have proved to be a failure, and few of them still survive.



Here is an extract from a speech recently delivered by M. Kalinin, the Commissar, who has taken a special interest in the Russian village: "The quantity of poor peasants is not increasing, but the difference between the poor and the middle peasants and the rich peasant is increasing. . . . In 1918-21 the *kulak* (rich peasant) was ruined; to-day, compared with the other classes in the village, he is again well off. In those years the peasants were more or less equal; but as wealth increases so inequalities increase."

In other words, M. Kalinin says that in the years 1919-21, the years of Militant Communism, the village was reduced to a common level of poverty, and that the subsequent restoration of private trade under State control rehabilitated the rich and middle peasant, but the poor became poorer—much poorer—than before.

What Kalinin says is perfectly true, but one explanation needs to be made. When he uses the word "rich" he is speaking in a relative sense, for everyone in Russia is poor, only some more so than others. This subject of the *kulak* is one that has caused the Bolsheviks considerable perplexity. What is a *kulak*? This is a question which I put to many Soviet officials in Russia. None could give a clear answer, just as I could get no clear answer when I asked: "What is a speculator?"

Revolutionary propaganda had spread mental confusion. As in the towns a person who had decent manners and lived in decent surroundings was regarded as a "bourjoui," so in the country a peasant who worked industriously and kept his home clean and comfortable was looked upon as a *kulak*; both were considered to be enemies of the Revolution, and were marked out for extermination. But in the end the Bolsheviks became the victims of their own propaganda; for while it was a matter of life and death for them that a sufficiency of crops should be raised for the rationing of the population, sober and industrious elements amongst the peasantry, upon whom production mainly depended, were subjected to heavy exactions and completely ruined.

Ultimately an authoritative definition of the word *kulak* was forthcoming. "Ownership of property," said Kalinin,

“does not necessarily reveal a *kulak*. A *kulak* is a peasant who desires to take advantage of his neighbour. This desire is, of course, common to every peasant, whether rich or poor. But the rich peasants are better situated to take advantage of their neighbours than the poor ones.”

Once all attempts to force Communism on the village were abandoned, rich peasants soon reappeared. These rich peasants were the same men who had been rich before Communism had been introduced, and who had been ruined as a consequence of its confiscatory methods.

To-day the rich peasant is far more influential than ever he was; he and not the Soviet is the power that governs in the villages.

Even the commercial organs created and controlled by the Bolsheviks themselves—the state trusts—say that they prefer to deal with a rich rather than with a poor peasant, for the rich peasant has more grain and more raw materials to dispose of, and can therefore afford to purchase more goods from the towns, as a consequence of which he is honoured and respected by state enterprises and officials.

In the villages nearly all the shops are closed. The country is almost completely cut off from the town, and its wants are largely served by handicraftsmen. Thus, under a communist government, production has gone back to the system prevailing more than a century ago, while the *kulak* survives as middleman and profiteer.

The Soviet law is a dead letter in the Russian village. The only law that prevails there is the law of the jungle. “Your own shirt is next your skin: everyone works for himself,” says the peasant.

What a strange result of the Revolution, the aim of which was to create Communism: the rapacious man flourishes more than ever; the poor have become poorer! And after all the talk of freedom, what do we see? Slavery—real slavery—again established in the village. The State cannot give the poor peasant the credit of which he so badly stands in need, and so he falls into the hands of the rich peasant, who exacts his own terms.

The rich peasant owns the horse, the implements, the

mill, and, in fact, most of the means of production. And the poor peasant has nothing but his land and his labour.

In some parts a horse is so rare a beast that frequently the cow is used for ploughing, and the peasants throw buckets of water over it to keep it cool, and call it a "tractor with its own steam." In other regions the cow is so scarce that the ploughing has to be done by hand. Ploughing by hand! Imagine the infinite labour!

To get the use of a horse, the poor peasant has to go to the rich peasant. He cannot afford to pay money; and so he agrees to give his labour instead. In the village there are no fancy Soviet laws; no eight-hour day, no minimum wage.

The poor peasant works for his richer neighbour many days, and each day from sunrise to sunset; and by the time he has done his task the season has flown, and it is too late to make use of the horse for which he has paid with his toil. Sometimes he pays the rich usurer with quantities of produce; he keeps on paying until he has given his last. Then he and his family are forced to starve, and he is lucky if he has not to go to prison for inability to pay his taxes.

Often the peasant makes his land over to the rich man merely to have his taxation paid for him; often he gives it to him in return for a sack of flour or a little food, and continues to pay the taxation on it himself. Instances have occurred in which a peasant managed to get into his hands the lands of nine or ten of his poorer neighbours.

I know of one case where a woman parted with her portion of land for 2 lb. of ham on condition that the taxation was paid by the new owner. But he failed to pay the taxation, and as a consequence she was put to prison and forfeited her land.

Of course, all such transactions are contrary to the law. But who cares about the law? "It's no use to go to court against the rich man," says the poor peasant. On the rare occasions when he discovers the location of a government office, and musters up enough pluck to go there, his enterprise comes to nothing; for the first thing he is asked to do is to fill up a form, and the next to pay a fee

of a gold rouble. He is too illiterate to comply with the first request; too poor to meet the second one.

Nor can he get any help from the Soviet or Village Council. This body is frequently dominated by the rich man, and concerns itself only with trivial affairs. Even then the agenda of its meetings and the decisions reached must be sanctioned by the higher authorities; the Bolsheviks do not permit the peasants to discuss politics too freely.

In the main, the village Soviet has degenerated into a tax-collecting agency. The state apparatus is capable of collecting its own dues, and imposing penalties when these are not forthcoming, but breaks down when it becomes a question of asserting the peasants' rights.

One poor peasant said: "The rich man closes our gullets. If we open our mouths, he shouts, 'You are lazy.' . . . But if I only had a horse I would tear out every rich man's gullet." Another one remarked: "A poor man can't struggle against a rich man. He can't shout louder than *he* does. You must submit to the rich man. You can't offend him. You always need something from him. Perhaps your ideas are better than his, but he won't listen to them because you are poor."

Mutual aid societies have been formed in the villages on the Kropotkin principle. But the poor man has little opinion of them. "Mutual aid societies for the rich," he calls them, and it is a fact that the committees are often made up of rich men only.

Most of the co-operative organisations for working the land have developed into syndicates of rich peasants, who bribe poor relations with a little reward to take up shares in order to increase their own holding of land. Of these co-operative enterprises the peasant says: "There are no good people in the world. If you co-operate with other people they will sell you, and divide the money amongst themselves. What you pay will go to them. We are crushed by the rich. It always was so, and it always will be so."

The rich man thrives on jungle methods; the poor man reverts to slavery, and consoles himself with a philosophy of fatalism. That is the story of the Russian village under



the Bolshevik *régime*. It is a story the truth of which the Soviet Government cannot, and will not, deny.

Thousands of peasants drift into the towns looking for work; and thousands of workmen drift into the villages looking for bread. Life has become nomadic. . . . In Novgorod I met whole peasant families on the tramp. Many were suffering from hideous diseases. I remember, in particular, a woman whose eyes were bandaged up. She had just undergone a serious eye operation, and was sleeping by the roadside, her face covered with flies; around her played a swarm of hungry children. In four months the local hospital, not a big establishment, had dealt with 35,000 in-patients and 26,000 out-patients. Medical aid in the villages is almost unobtainable, and sick peasants go to the nearest towns for treatment.

Education has sunk to a low level. Few peasant girls attend school, and only the sons of the rich are able to acquire a little learning. A teacher receives a salary of five shillings weekly, and sometimes has to wait three or four weeks for what is due to him.

Like a shepherd in the old days, he wanders from village to village, and from house to house, begging for a night's shelter or a bite of food, or hiring himself out as a labourer to the rich man. He may not be religiously inclined, but often he is forced to baptise children or read psalms for the dead in order to earn the reward of a few pence.

Here is a picture of village education, given by no less an authority than Mme. Krupskaya (Lenin's widow):—"It is winter time. The schoolhouse is in a bad state of repair, and it is not heated. Consequently the class-rooms are boarded up. The teacher, dressed in rags, is instructing the pupils in his own room, and as this room is also very little heated he is sitting on the stove.\* He is dictating to the pupils, who are crawling about on the floor, which is very dirty, and are writing with chalk on the floor or walls."

Yet in spite of everything the peasant still says: "God gave, and God takes . . . no use to grumble too much."

The dark masses of the Russian village present a problem

\* From the village stove there is an extension, on which people may sit or lie.

which only generations and generations will solve. No form of government can get quick results.

Again and again the Bolsheviks have been forced to retreat before the peasants, the overwhelming majority of whom, in spite of their experience of primitive communal organisation in the old days, remain primitive individualists. Life has taught them that power and wealth are often associated, and the bitter experiences of the Revolution have only confirmed this melancholy lesson. The one aim of most of them is to survive as best they can regardless of their neighbours' welfare.

Not long ago the Soviet Government had to realise that its laws carried little weight in the villages, and changes were introduced with the view to bringing these laws into some relationship with life itself. The hiring of peasant labour was allowed, and the leasing of land up to a period of twelve years was once more made legally permissible. Thus the landlord and the exploiter of labour returned again, and were officially recognised by the Socialist State.

## CHAPTER XLVII

### ECONOMICS OF THE REVOLUTION

My final chapter will be mainly concerned with the economic system of the Soviet State. But before describing this system I propose to recite some interesting historical facts concerning the economic causes which led to the downfall of the Imperial *régime*. The archives of the Russian Revolution are now being published. A recent volume of these archives contained notes of the secret meetings of the Council of Ministers under the Presidency of M. Goremykin, which took place between July and September of 1915. These notes may be regarded as authentic, for they were taken down at the time by M. Yakhontev, who held an important secretarial post in connection with the Council. From them we get a truthful picture of the appalling condition that prevailed in Russia at this period. The position at the front was already catastrophic; the army was rapidly retiring; worse than this, the psychology of the High Command had become the psychology of retreat; its will was completely paralysed and was dominated by only one idea, to get further and further away from the enemy. As the armies went back, terrible cruelties were inflicted upon the civil population. The panic of the High Command had been communicated to the lower ranks of officers, who behaved atrociously. A reign of terror was set up. Large numbers of people, including many children, were arrested on suspicion of being spies and thrown into prison.

In particular the Jews were made to suffer; thousands of them were evacuated from the theatre of operations and driven in herds wheresoever regimental officers deemed necessary. Meanwhile, the Emperor was kept in ignorance of the true facts of the situation. And the ministers

did not even take the trouble to consult the commanders at the front as to what measures should be adopted to prevent the clearly impending calamity. It was evident that the population had lost all faith in the Government. Revolutionary outbreaks occurred for the first time not only throughout the country but in the armies at the front. And the Allies protested against the treatment which was being meted out to the Jews.

M. Sazonov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, urged that the whole position should be frankly revealed to the Emperor. He said rightly that at such a moment extreme cautiousness was "on the frontier of crime." Soon, M. Bark, the Minister of Finance, encountered difficulties in the conduct of financial operations; these difficulties were unquestionably created by Jews in revenge for the persecution of their race. At that time the prejudice which existed in the army against the Jews was supported by powerful generals. The view widely prevailed amongst the soldiers that the Jews were largely responsible for Russia's reverses; and it was reported to the Council of Ministers that "a pogrom mood was growing in the army." Several ministers felt that a terrible calamity, the consequences of which would shake the world, was at hand, and that nothing could be done to avert it. An attempt to raise an internal loan had failed, and all efforts to obtain money from abroad were fruitless. Several eminent Jewish capitalists visited the Minister of Finance and told him that financial salvation depended upon an immediate change of policy on the Jewish question. They did not blame the Government for the sufferings of the Jews in the theatre of war, but they said frankly that they expected some humanitarian measures to be taken without delay in order to ameliorate the lot of their race. Summed up, their attitude was as follows: When you give we will give.

The Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Finance were persuaded that the sooner some concession was made to the Jews the better. And in August the Emperor agreed to grant freedom of residence to the Jews, who had hitherto been confined to certain areas. But effect



was not given to this decision. For a number of ministers began to object that it was ill-timed. The Russian people, they urged, were undergoing terrible sufferings; and it was wrong that the Jews should be allowed to exploit these sufferings for the alleviation of their own position, and that Jewish bankers should be given an opportunity of boasting that they had made use of Russia's sorrows in order to buy privileges for their race. In the minds of these ministers the Jews were definitely associated with the revolutionary movement in Russia.

"What are we to do? All the money is in Jewish hands," was the despairing comment of the Minister of the Interior.

And the Minister of Finance, after expressing his deep sorrow at the dilemma in which the country was placed, remarked: "But in face of the demands of an extremely difficult moment we ought not to be led by our feelings. Not we created this moment; it was created by those whom we have so long vainly begged to refrain from aggravating the Jewish question, by the use of Cossack whips. It is we who have now to pay for these whips, because money wherewith to carry on the war is demanded from the Government; and this money is in the hands of that race which has been subjected to treatment of a kind that would not be tolerated in any civilised country."

Thus we have proof of the important if not decisive part played by the Jews in bringing about the downfall of the old *régime*. This downfall was the consequence of economic catastrophe no less than of military defeat. By withholding financial aid at the critical moment the Jewish bankers fulfilled the prophecy of the wise men, that the wanton persecution of the Jews would one day accomplish the ruin of Russia.

If the Government was unable to find money wherewith to carry on the war, the Bolsheviks had no difficulty in securing funds wherewith to ferment revolution not only in Russia but in the countries allied to Russia.

M. Bourtzev, who achieved fame for his exposure of the provocateur, Azev, has published circumstantial details of

the relations of Lenin and other prominent Bolsheviks with the Germans during the war.\* In 1915-16 Lenin lived in Berne, co-operated with a Major of the German General Staff, and received seventy million marks for the purpose of defraying the cost of his revolutionary agitation in Russia and the countries allied with Russia. Other prominent Bolsheviks, including Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Radek, were given financial assistance by German authorities and bankers in Stockholm and Copenhagen. The Germans sought to make use of the services of the Bolshevik leaders for their own military purposes, but they had a poor understanding of Bolshevik aims. In the end the Russian Revolution went to lengths such as they had never anticipated; and its virus infected the morale of the German armies and peoples. Thus fate had its revenge; the deceivers were deceived.

I have set forth the foregoing facts before proceeding to a description of the Soviet economic system because I wish to emphasise the paramount rôle which the power of money played in bringing about the Revolution. And here it may not be out of place to mention that well-documented works have recently been published in France proving that neither Robespierre nor Danton were isolated figures upon the revolutionary stage, but that both were puppets of financial backers.

And now let us see what part economics play in shaping the destiny of Revolutionary Russia. The Bolshevik system is fundamentally economic. If it is not economically successful within a reasonable period, then it can have no justification in prolonging its existence. Here it may be asked: What is meant by economic success? The answer was furnished by Lenin himself: "When the formula will be realised: 'From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs.'" In other words, the ultimate goal of Bolshevism is to make all men rich in the sense that they are able to obtain what they require. Has any progress been made towards this end? So far, none.

Up to the present, activity has been directed towards the creation of a fund of material goods for distribution amongst

\* *La Trahison de Lenin*, by V. Bourtzev, 1921.

the community. But this activity, far from yielding a sufficiency, has only led to scarcity; hence poverty has increased and affluence is further off than ever. In these circumstances it would have been a mockery to teach the doctrine that taste and simplicity are not irreconcilable, and that the limitation of desire is not incompatible with the enjoyment of life.

In face of a scarcity of commodities the Bolsheviks dare not seek a solution along these lines. But doubtless some such solution will have to be sought if, in any society, Lenin's formula of "from each according to his ability; to each according to his needs" is ever to have a prospect of realisation.

In the beginning, the Bolsheviks sought to establish Communism by sheer force; this period (which is dealt with at length in earlier chapters) is known as that of Militant Communism. And Militant Communism is the term used to describe the attempt made in the early days of the Revolution to compel all citizens to become the hired employés of the State, and to carry out an equal division of the pool of products which resulted from the labour of this vast army of civil serfs. It ended as we have seen, not in Communism but in a struggle between despotism and anarchy, and finally in economic cataclysm. Yet there is evidence to show that, as a consequence of the chaos which prevailed, Lenin's plans were never carried out as he desired that they should be carried out. From the beginning, the system which he had in mind was State Capitalism, the State being a proletarian dictatorship; in other words, he aimed at the rigid control and not the extinction of the capitalist. This control he held would be *almost* Socialism; and Socialism he regarded as the first stage of Communism. But instead of proceeding by this stage, the Revolution plunged headlong into an attempt to establish Communism; and ruin was the consequence. It has been said by many Bolsheviks that no other alternative was possible; civil war and hunger prevailed, and therefore state control of production and distribution was essential. Had this state control (so they say) not been established a still worse calamity than that

which befell Russia would have resulted. At the same time, these Bolsheviks insist that the failure of the experiment was solely due to the allied blockade and the civil war. In regard to the former assertion—that state control was unavoidable and that it saved the situation—it must be borne in mind that this state control was only partial in the beginning. Large numbers of workers seized factories and ran them on their own account, not on behalf of the State; they imagined that the Revolution gave them the right to set up a primitive communism of their own, and the Bolsheviks thought it wiser not to interfere with them.

Also, it must be remembered that whatever may be said for state control of industry, it was the extension of this control to the domain of agriculture that produced results so catastrophic, and compelled the abandonment of Militant Communism.

If additional proof were needed that the collapse of the experiment was not wholly due to allied intervention and blockade, it is to be found in Lenin's own statements. He frankly confessed that Communism failed because the Bolsheviks were inexperienced and incompetent as business managers.

In 1921, Militant Communism came to an end, and the New Economic Policy was inaugurated. The basis of this policy was the limited restoration of capitalism under the rigid control of the State. Thus, four years after their assumption of power the Bolsheviks were driven to accept a system of State Capitalism such as Lenin had advocated from the beginning. But in the past, Lenin's voice on the subject had been drowned amid the roar for the expropriation of everything—a roar which some of his own demagogic utterances had stimulated.

The New Economic Policy abandoned the requisitioning of grain, and permitted freedom of trade to private individuals under the licence of the State. Small industrial enterprises employing not more than twenty workers were returned to their former owners, whilst larger concerns, employing up to a maximum of seventy workers, were leased to private individuals. All large industries continued to be nationalised.



State industry was divided into three groups: (1) industry of the whole union of Soviet republics, (2) industry of the separate republics, (3) local industry. The first group, comprising two-thirds of the nationalised industry, was put under the control of the Supreme Economic Council; the second group was placed under the control of councils in the several republics, and the third under that of local councils.

Industries were classified as light or heavy and their management was delegated to trusts. Some five hundred trusts were established. A trust is managed by a Council of Administration which is equivalent to a Board of Directors. This Council consists of business men, specialists, and communists; the pay of the directors averages fifty roubles (£5) per month with the exception of communists, who receive less than half that amount. The Council frequently includes amongst its members the former owners of enterprises which are under its management, and also men who a few years ago were simple workers.

The powers of the trusts are regulated by decree. Their statutes must be approved by the Council of Labour and Defence, but, subject to the provisions of these statutes, the trusts may dispose of their capital (which is allotted to them in the first instance by the State) as they will. Each trust is in theory an independent economic undertaking. The State Treasury is not responsible for its debts, and should it become insolvent it may be wound up. To sum up, it acts as agent for the State in the disposal of capital; and the rights of the State over its management are equivalent to those exercised by the shareholders of any public company over a Board of Directors. Balance sheets are submitted annually to the governing authorities; and if there should be any profits, these may be disposed of in the following proportions: 50 per cent. to the State, 25 per cent. to the reserve funds, and 25 per cent. to improvement of the conditions of the employés. Of the latter sum, 3 per cent. is shared amongst the employés, the higher grades receiving the most. But the State is entitled, should it so desire, to take the whole of the net profit for itself. Many trusts have voluntarily

formed syndicates for the purpose of distributing their produce and purchasing raw materials.

The New Economic Policy not only involved reorganisation of nationalised industry, but also drastic financial reforms, including the restoration of banking. The original plan of the Bolsheviks was to get rid of money altogether, and to substitute for it labour cards which would entitle the holders to receive a just share of commodities in proportion to the amount of work which they had performed. This plan was an attempt to give expression to the Marxian principle that labour-power, and labour-power alone, creates wealth. But, as everything was in chaos, it could not be carried out; labour cards were distributed, it is true, but their records were farcical and had little relation to the value of the work performed by the holders. And so the Bolsheviks resorted to the rough-and-ready alternative of getting rid of money by printing limitless quantities of it, thus ruthlessly destroying its value. How fantastic were the consequences of this depreciation was demonstrated by a calculation which a well-known Russian economist made in my presence: "St. Isaac's Cathedral in Leningrad," he said, "was built of granite and marble with a lavish disregard for expense. It is estimated to have cost thirty-five million pounds, which, allowing for devaluation, is one-eighth of the price of an egg to-day."

At first all banks were absorbed into the State Bank, which became the People's Bank. But soon the People's Bank was liquidated, and banking was abolished altogether. In 1921 the State Bank was revived and drastic measures were taken to stabilise the currency. By this time the paper rouble had fallen to one sixty-thousandth of its pre-war value. In 1922 a paper rouble was issued and made exchangeable for 10,000 roubles of former issues, and in 1923 another rouble was put into circulation exchangeable for 1,000,000 of the original Soviet roubles or 100 of the 1922 currency. A serious budget was established for the first time, and a State monopoly of import and export trade was organised. A word or two must be said here in regard to this monopoly. In practice





M. SOKOLNIKOV.

Formerly Commissar of Finance; now of the Gosplan State Planning Department.



M. PIATAKOV.

Member of the Collegiate of the Supreme Economic Council.



it is an absolute monopoly. Licences for import and export are sometimes granted to private traders, but every stage of the transaction is under the strict supervision of the State. And the State sees to it that, no matter how enterprising an individual may be, he does not get an advantage over the State trading concerns.

Such is a brief outline of the economic organisation which was created in 1921 when Militant Communism came to an end. This economic organisation is supposed to function according to orderly plans. These plans are worked out by the State Planning Department, known as Gosplan, which is composed of economists, statisticians, engineers, and various other specialists. It is independent of all other departments, and has full access to all departmental records. Whenever any measure of importance is contemplated affecting public economy, the Gosplan is first consulted, the idea being that no action shall be sanctioned inconsistent with the national welfare.

It is claimed by the State Planning Department that 89 per cent. of the means of production of Russian industry have been socialised (or nationalised). If railways are included in the calculation, then the proportion of industry socialised increases to 97 per cent.

But the figures of the State Planning Department are misleading, for they take no account of the large number of individual handicraftsmen—*kustari* as these are called—who are working on their own account, producing articles for the market. According to the estimate of some economists, the value of the production of these *kustari* amounted in 1924-5 to 40 per cent. of the value of the whole industrial production of the country.

In spite of ceaseless oppression by the State, small private industries, apart from *kustari*, are increasing. The rate of growth is not so fast, it is true, as that of state industry, but nevertheless it is noticeable. It must not be forgotten that small industries have suffered the most from the devastation of the Revolution. Their capital was ruthlessly confiscated in the beginning, and their owners have been persistently persecuted by the authorities. The taxation exacted from them, moreover, is higher than that

imposed upon state enterprise. Yet in the face of all these disabilities, small private industries, as I have said, show a marked tendency to increase. In 1925-6 the total number of persons employed in these industries was 3,044,000 compared with 2,504,000 in 1923-4, an increase of 20 per cent., while in 1925-6 the value of their production increased by 25 per cent.

Agriculture presents a quite different picture from that of industry; here, of the means of production (consisting chiefly of small holdings) 96 per cent. remain privately owned by the peasants, and only 4 per cent. have been socialised. But the agricultural means of production form but a little more than a third of all the means of production of the Soviet Union. It is evident, therefore, that, controlling as it does close on two-thirds of the total means of production, the State holds a very strong position in its war against private enterprise. But it is not sufficient to have a virtual monopoly of the industrial means of production. Commodities must be produced and distributed in sufficient quantities and at prices low enough to satisfy the demands of the population. In a word, state ownership has to be supplemented by efficient state management if it is to be successful. This confronts us with a very important issue, which must be reserved for discussion at a later stage.

The structure of the New Economic Policy which replaced Militant Communism in 1921 having been described, the question arises: Upon what system is this policy based? If we were to take the means of production as our guide the answer would be Socialism, for the State, as we have seen, owns two-thirds of these means. Lenin, it may be recalled, declared that the New Economic Policy was State Capitalism, but insisted that State Capitalism when, as in Russia, controlled by a Workers' Government, must be regarded as *almost complete Socialism*. This form of State Capitalism was certainly different from that applied in Germany during the war and from the Fascist Syndicalism set up in Italy in recent times; both these systems, it is true, involved a measure of state control, but this was achieved in co-operation with private enterprise, whereas in

Soviet Russia private enterprise on a large scale has been totally annihilated, and the economic organisation of the State has taken the form of a trust of trusts.

Despite the fact that Lenin described the New Economic Policy as almost complete Socialism, he asserted that it permitted of Capitalism also, and insisted that the whole essence of the policy was rivalry between Capitalism and Socialism. He had no doubt as to which system would triumph. The New Economic Policy was to lead from almost complete to complete Socialism, which, in turn, was to pave the way for perfect Communism: Society without the State. All the Bolsheviki leaders accepted Lenin's interpretation of the New Economic Policy; that is to say, they regarded it as a policy founded upon the existence side by side of two mutually opposing systems, Capitalism and Socialism.

To find a more or less appropriate comparison with the New Economic Policy of Soviet Russia we must go back to ancient days, back to the Byzantine Empire, with which Russia always had close relations. In Byzantium certain industries were nationalised; the manufacture of golden cloth, which was much in use, and the purchase of raw silk were monopolies of the State. The people employed in various trades were organised into guilds, and only these guilds had the right to purchase goods. State control was rigid. The prices of food and of all indispensable commodities were fixed by the State; and to facilitate control and prevent extortionate charges, all sales had to be effected in public and in stipulated places. For breaches of the law punishments were severe: flogging, confiscation of property, exile, and the loss of a hand. The control over external trade was no less severe than that exercised over internal trade. Foreign merchants were only permitted to stay in the country for a short while. All their transactions were carried out under the strict supervision of the State; and no article was allowed to be exported which had not been inspected and passed by state officials. Whenever a war or national calamity occurred, the wealthy people were compelled to give up their jewels and a considerable part of their fortunes to the State; thus the capital

levy was frequently practised. Byzantium survived for a thousand years, and at times amassed gold to an extent which far surpassed the hoard of modern America.

Which is winning in Soviet Russia: Socialism or Capitalism, private enterprise or state enterprise?

After all that has been said it would seem that there is little scope for private enterprise. Let us see whether this is really so. Has private enterprise any chance of existence in Soviet Russia?

In the sphere of production (apart from *kustari*) the prospects of private enterprise are not too hopeful: nearly two-thirds of the means of production socialised, the remaining third in the hands of private enterprise, that is to say, of the peasants. When, however, we come to actual production a different story has to be told. Here agriculture predominates over industry. According to Professor Litoshenko, a noted economist, of the various items that made up the total of 15 milliards gold roubles which was the value of gross production in 1923-4, rural production accounted for 51.5 per cent. and industrial production for 38.5 per cent.; and of the various items which made up the total of 12.4 milliard roubles—the value of net production in the same year—rural production accounted for 47.7 per cent. and industrial production for 22.8 per cent.

Professor Litoshenko adds, moreover, that of the material value of net production, private economy is responsible for three-quarters while State economy can only be credited with one-quarter. He also calculates that of the total national income of 14.7 milliards, two-thirds is produced by the rural population.

The predominance of rural production over industrial production is not surprising. Russia is a vast country, and fully 85 per cent. of her population procure a livelihood from agriculture and from petty industries associated with agriculture. At present the peasants only put one-third of their produce on the market; the remaining two-thirds are retained for their own consumption and use.

It is thus quite evident that they are fighting shy of the



socialistic web which the State has spread before them, and that they are building up amongst themselves their own economic forms and relations, based upon individual enterprise. This attitude of aloofness on the part of the peasants is unquestionably a formidable impediment to the collectivist plans of the Soviet State, if it is not a menace to its very existence.

And now let us see what opportunities for private enterprise exist outside the sphere of agricultural production. In regard to industrial production (apart from concessions which are governed by special conditions) the opportunities are limited; the State monopolises big industry, and restricts private enterprise to small-scale undertakings. It is in the sphere of retail trade that private enterprise finds most scope for its activity. According to M. Larin, a Bolshevik economist, in Russia proper at the end of 1923 private traders conducted nine-tenths of the retail village trade and four-fifths of the retail town trade. At the end of the financial year of 1922-3 private enterprise accounted for 83 per cent. of the turnover of retail trade. As regards wholesale trade, the position was reversed; here the state and co-operative organisations accounted for 85 per cent. of the turnover.

Let us recapitulate.

The task set before state enterprise is to beat private enterprise to the point of extinction. When private enterprise is annihilated, Communism will have been established, not Communism of the kind which had such disastrous consequences in the early stages of the Revolution, but efficient Communism. But this aim cannot be realised in a day. Meanwhile, private capital is to be tolerated and even made use of in the furtherance of a policy, the essence of which is rivalry between two systems, private enterprise and state enterprise.

How is it proposed that state enterprise shall overcome private enterprise? Let us speak first of the sphere of production. The State, as has been shown, monopolises the production of big industries; but agricultural production remains in private hands—the hands of the peasants—and its value exceeds that of the production of state industry.

The Bolsheviks believe that the peasants will be converted to Socialism through the medium of co-operation, and that co-operation will facilitate the reconstruction and industrialisation of agriculture, by which is meant the spread of electrification and of scientific methods of cultivation. These plans presuppose the accumulation of vast capital resources; they also presuppose that twenty-two million peasant households, composed of small farmers, will ultimately abandon individualism for co-operation. Taking, then, the most optimistic view possible, it is clear that very many years must pass before the Bolshevik vision can be realised. Meanwhile, the fact has to be faced that only one-third of the peasants' production can be enticed on to the market. The reason for this is two-fold: first, the peasants have little faith in the justice of the State and not too much confidence in the value of its currency; secondly, state industry cannot manufacture commodities in sufficient quantity and low enough in price to induce the peasants to part with a considerable share of their produce. These facts at once suggest that the New Economic Policy is a failure, and that nationalised industry is hopelessly inefficient. Before, however, we are justified in passing a final verdict upon the Soviet system, a more thorough analysis of its results must be undertaken.

The Gosplan or State Planning Department sums up these results as follows:—The produce of agriculture in the financial year 1924–5 amounted to 71 per cent. of the pre-war year of 1913; and the value of industrial output in the year 1924–5 reached 71 per cent. of the value of the output of 1913. When we reflect that in 1920–1, at the end of the calamitous period known as Militant Communism, industrial production was 17·5 per cent. and agricultural production 52 per cent. of pre-war totals, it will be realised that a rapid economic recovery has taken place. Many Bolsheviks assert that this recovery was due to the cessation of the civil war and the allied blockade. But that is only partially true. In reality, recovery began with the abandonment of Militant Communism and the inauguration of the New Economic Policy which restored

limited freedom to private trade. And here attention may be drawn to one very interesting circumstance; in the darkest days, when national production was at its lowest ebb, the production of agriculture was much higher than that of industry. This fact is easily explained. During the period of Militant Communism the peasants sought to evade the requisitions of the State by shrinking the area under cultivation to the lowest possible limit essential for their own survival. At one time even this limit was passed, and the penalty had to be paid in famine. Nevertheless, despite the hostility of the village to Communism, the land was the saviour of the nation. Naturally, the peasants had no desire to bring about the complete destruction of the industry from which they got their livelihood; even had this desire been present it would have been impossible of fulfilment, for in a country where agriculture is conducted by methods so primitive as those practised in Russia, its ruin could not easily be accomplished.

In these circumstances it was not surprising that agriculture should have recovered more rapidly than industry; but even so the revival of industry has been remarkably quick; barely five years have elapsed since the New Economic Policy began to operate, and the output of Soviet industry is said to be within measurable distance of that of the industry of pre-war Russia.

The Bolsheviks attribute this economic rehabilitation to their own constructive abilities no less than to the productive capacity of Socialism. But the truth is that the destruction of the basic capital of industry during the Revolution—that is to say, of machinery, equipment, etc.—was not so great as has been supposed. It was the functional rather than the material structure of industry that suffered most from devastation. Some extremists amongst the Bolsheviks had hoped that it would turn out otherwise; that it would be possible to make a fresh start on ground from which all the traces of the past had been swept away. “A naked man on the naked earth!” was the cry of one eminent writer in his disgust with the civilisation of the epoch. And this vision was partially realised. Before the ardent days of the Revolution had been lived

through, multitudes of people experienced difficulty in finding raiment wherewith to cover their nakedness; while if the whole earth did not become naked, vast tracts of it were nevertheless stripped bare of cultivation.

Fortunately for the people of Russia, the mechanical equipment of industry, though badly injured, survived. It was not difficult to damage machinery; small parts which were irreplaceable at such a time could be broken or carried off with ease. But destruction on a large scale would have required the exercise of more intelligence and skill than is usually to be found associated with mob violence.

And so it came about that the basic capital of Russian industry was largely preserved at a time when destruction was widespread. To this fact is mainly to be attributed the quick pace of economic recovery.

Up to the present nationalised industry has been existing and expanding as a consequence of the basic capital (and also stocks) accumulated by private enterprise in the past. Where damage has been inflicted upon machinery the damage has been made good, and numerous factories are now working again. But little has been done in the way of new construction; hardly any up-to-date machinery has been installed since the Revolution. When it is recollected that many Russian factories were not well equipped in the old days, and that renovation has been totally neglected over a period of ten years, it may well be understood that the mechanism of Soviet industry is in none too efficient a state. On its present basis this industry is now approaching, if it has not already reached, its fullest possible capacity of production. Expansion beyond this limit will depend solely upon increasing the means of production: that is, of basic capital as represented by buildings, machines and equipment. But all these things cost money. And where is the money to come from?

That industry should have been restored to almost pre-war level is evidence of the resourcefulness of the Russian people, but it can by no means be taken as a vindication of the economic theories of Bolshevism. Apart from the fact that the achievement was rendered possible because of



the preservation of basic capital accumulated by private enterprise in the past, other considerations have to be taken into account, as, for example, whether the volume of production is adequate to the needs of the population, and the cost of production sufficiently low for the modest purse of the average citizen. Should these tests be applied to Soviet industry, then it must be confessed that it has been a lamentable failure, for the prices of its goods are excessive and instead of abundance there is dearth. How, it may be asked, does this arise, if the pre-war production is near attainment?

The answer is, that owing to the decline of industry during the war and its almost total collapse in the period of Militant Communism, stocks of manufactured articles became depleted; these stocks, upon which the Soviet system sustained itself for a considerable while, have now been exhausted, and the current production is wholly insufficient to meet the demands of a population increasing at the rate of two millions annually, added to which cost of production is excessively high.

In theory, Soviet industry ought to function smoothly. Its structure is symmetrical, imposing and massive, and its activities are planned and controlled at every stage. Behind it, moreover, stands the whole power of the State. And in Russia there is nothing that the State cannot do. It can regulate prices and production. It can determine what goods shall be imported or exported, for it has a monopoly of foreign trade. It can use public money wherewith to subsidise state industries, and can resort to endless repressive measures, including excessive taxation, arrest, imprisonment, exile, and even shooting, with a view to crushing the rivalry of private enterprise. In fact, all these measures have been relentlessly enforced from time to time—and yet state industry is not as yet a conspicuous success.

When Lenin organised state trusts to manage the various nationalised industries, each trust to be responsible for its own financial destiny, he believed that economic independence would be harnessed in the service of the community. But he was mistaken. The trusts compete one

with another, as did private enterprises in the old days, and so send up the prices of commodities. Frequently they are content to trade amongst themselves regardless altogether of the existence of a public which thirsts for cheap manufactured goods. Often too they buy one from another stocks which could be purchased more cheaply by direct methods in the open market. In some instances, trusts whose function it is to export raw materials only, have embarked upon retail and wholesale trade in the internal market. Sometimes in the passage from the factory to the consumer, commodities have been dealt in as many as ten or fifteen times by various trading organisations. The Bolsheviks have not succeeded in getting rid of middlemen; they have merely substituted state middlemen for private middlemen. Then the evil of bureaucracy, which is the worst feature of the Soviet State, flourishes in the trusts. Bribery and corruption are much practised in Soviet Russia, but nowhere more so than amongst the staffs of these trusts. That is explicable; for the pay of the officials is poor, and as they are concerned with trade, the temptation to make money by crooked methods is always there.

Owing to excessive rents, rates, and expensive credit, overhead charges are extravagantly high and show a tendency to increase. The Central Statistical Department, when calculating the national income for 1923-4, estimated that in the retail trade such charges amounted to 42·3 per cent. of the wholesale prices paid.

It is often said that criticism of the Bolshevik economic administration comes from those who are determined to discredit socialism and uphold capitalism. Frequently labour delegations visit Russia and on their return make reports containing elaborate refutations of such criticism.

Where is the truth?

Let the Bolshevik leaders speak for themselves.

On April 20th of 1926, the late M. Dzerzhinsky, who was then President of the Supreme Economic Council, addressing the Presidium of this body, made use of the following words: "We are living with unheard-of extravagance. We are squandering hundreds of millions. Our trusts and trading organisations are weighed down beneath

a mass of superfluous expenses. According to their balance sheets they allow extras to the extent of hundreds of millions of roubles. These extravagances are transformed into town demands, and so goods cannot reach the villages in sufficient quantities. All these superfluous expenses raise prices to prohibitive levels. The staffs of the trusts are swollen to unprecedented dimensions. Take the Steel Trust for instance. Despite the difficult financial position of this trust, its staff has been increased from 250 to 900. Colossal money is swallowed in payment of salaries. The same thing is true of the co-operative organisations. . . . There are 400,000 officials alone associated with revision committees. . . . We wastefully consume vast quantities of oil, fuel and raw materials generally. Speculation flourishes on a gigantic scale, and goes on freely with goods, the producer of which is the State. State industry does not know how to distribute. Henceforth individuals and not collegiates must be made responsible. A director of a state enterprise ought to regard himself not as an official who sits tranquilly on the State budget, but as a master whose sole interest it is to reduce expenditure and so lower the cost of production. Our industry is a bureaucratic industry; it is necessary to change the whole system so as to make the individual responsible."

A few weeks before his death in July (1926) Dzerzhinsky made another speech in the course of which he said: "We are smothered in bureaucracy . . . but it is the man and not the machine who runs a business, and it is the work of individual brains which ensures success. . . . Our system and practice of administration are in themselves sufficient to paralyse efficiency and restrict output. For instance, one simple question by the Chairman of the Rubber Trust concerning prices had to pass through thirty-two various stages in the same office. All the accounts rendered have reached such dimensions that they have lost all meaning, and are simply unintelligible. I assert that all the figures presented to us in the reports of the trusts are inflated and fantastical. The accountancy is mere fantasy, it is bluff. . . . Why is a trust not rendered responsible for the figures and data which it presents? Because the trust gives such and such

figures, which we alter; our own figures are then altered by the Gosplan (State Planning Department), and so on *ad infinitum*. . . . According to such a system anyone is justified in telling lies. . . . We must cease writing such voluminous reports, which no one has time to read."

And on the day of his death Dzerzhinsky delivered a third despairing speech in which he said that the whole system with its swollen bureaucracy and preoccupation with trifles terrified him.

In April (1926) Stalin also delivered a speech in which he repeated what M. Dzerzhinsky had said. He alluded to the disgraceful bacchanalia of flinging millions of public money away on jubilees and festivals, and spoke of the enormous overhead charges on all business transactions. Communists, he said, were more culpable than non-party men; they regarded the resources of the State as private property. "An orgy of merry robbery," he continued, "is going on. The happy-go-lucky robbers can be counted by the thousands. And the worst of it is that they are looked upon as 'smart fellows' instead of being made the subject of public opprobrium."

One more quotation. In an appeal for economy issued in August 1926 by Stalin, Rykov and Kuibyshev (the latter had succeeded Dzerzhinsky as President of the Supreme Economic Council) the following passage occurred:

"As a minimum a few hundred millions of roubles are required to buttress industry. There are two ways possible to secure these hundreds of millions: one, by despoiling the peasants, squeezing from them the greatest possible amount, and placing the proceeds at the disposal of the Soviet industry. Some groups within the Communist Party advocate this course, but it is not acceptable, because it would increase the antagonism between the peasants and the workmen, and certainly undermine the dictatorship of the Communist Party.

"There remains only the possibility of curtailing the expenditure of the economic and administrative machinery, which devours about two milliard roubles (£200,000,000) annually, of which it would be possible to save 300,000 to 400,000 roubles to subsidise industry. But the *régime* of



economy proclaimed nearly a year ago remains a farce. Under the pretext of economy, factories employ an increased number of children, and curtail the number of adult workers, without the consent of the Trades Unions. They also cease lighting workmen's clubs, close workers' schools, abolish the supply of hot water to factory workers, and under various disguises lower the workers' wages.

"While this petty economy is being enforced at the workers' expense, the establishments maintain swollen staffs and the higher officials receive bonuses, increase their own salaries, give themselves everlasting travelling commissions, receive advances which they do not refund, exploit the official motor-cars for private purposes, and so on and so on. Such abuses have created hostility among the workmen towards the principle of economy, inducing them not to increase the productivity of labour."

Speeches without end could be quoted to prove the inefficiency of Soviet industry; as I have said, the most damaging evidence against the existing system in Russia is furnished by the Bolsheviks themselves.

The motor-car industry may be cited as a specific instance of state mismanagement. There are only 11,000 motor-cars in the whole of Soviet Russia. Of this total, a large proportion is reserved for the use of the bureaucracy; outside government departments long lines of cars are always standing, and in some of these cars may be seen crystal vases containing flowers—how difficult to get rid of "bourgeois prejudices!"

Cars have been indiscriminately imported from all the countries of the universe; it is estimated that no fewer than 513 different types are represented. When, as frequently happens, the cars break down after a few months' service, repairs cannot be made, for the reason that no spare parts are procurable in Russia.

Not long ago the state authorities purchased a number of cars which had arrived in Moscow. For each car, the price of which abroad was 6,000 roubles, they paid 18,000 roubles. In the Bolshevik Press a case was reported of a Ford car which originally cost 711 roubles. This car was priced 1,300 roubles at Helsingfors, but by the time it reached

Leningrad it commanded a figure of 3,600 roubles. It may be mentioned that the customs duty on a Ford car is seven times higher than that on a Rolls-Royce car.

Further evidence of the economic disorganisation of the Soviet system is to be found in a report made in April of 1926 by M. Rudzutak, who was then Commissar of Communications, concerning the appalling condition of the railways.

No new trucks, he said, had been constructed since the war and the Revolution; a deficiency of 30,000 trucks and 500 locomotives was to be expected this year. The permanent way was in a deplorable state.

Inspection and management were carried out in a slipshod manner, and accidents were on the increase. Drivers and firemen sometimes fell asleep. Closed signals were passed, and points set wrongly. Incorrect coupling and loose brake nuts were common.

Railway wages had given serious concern for the last two years, but had now been brought more or less into line with those of other industries; the average rate per month ruling at the beginning of 1924-5 of 41 roubles had grown by the beginning of 1925-6 to 58 roubles. The results of labour were, however, tending to fall, but good work could hardly be expected so long as station staffs were housed in trucks and tents. Workers' settlements consisted of dug-outs, and assistant station-masters received lower pay than labourers. Wages should depend upon responsibility.

Finance, continued the Commissar of Communications, was the crucial question. The growth in traffic of 41 per cent. during 1925, with the consequent increased revenue of 4 to 5 million roubles, had weakened the financial position of the railways. The big receipts of over 3 million roubles a day had misled the Government into regarding the railways as a prosperous concern. Budget expenditure had been fixed at 1,335 million roubles, but when the State Planning Commission found that the estimated mileage did not provide the revenue, it fixed the revenue rate per pood-verst at 0.026 kopeck in face of the railway calculation of 0.02 kopeck. This false basis meant that losses grew as traffic grew.

Yet despite all the disabilities from which it is suffering—lack of capital, mismanagement, competition, and high transport charges—Soviet industry has continued to expand since the introduction of the New Economic Policy, and particularly within the two last years. In 1924 the output increased by 64 per cent., and in 1925 by 40 per cent. But such growth, as I said at the beginning of this chapter, was only possible because factories equipped with machinery had been inherited from the past *régime*. This much was admitted in a speech made on May 18th [1926] by M. Rykov, President of the Council of Commissars, who added: "Henceforth we shall have to construct new factories and new equipment. This will be more difficult than starting old factories already equipped. That is why in the next few years we cannot hope to develop our industry as quickly as we have done in the past."

The productivity of labour is still far from what it should be. The daily output per worker has appreciably increased during the last few years, largely as a result of the increase of mechanical efficiency in the factories. But the volume of output suffers for the reason that absenteeism is practised on a colossal scale. In the course of the speech which has just been quoted, M. Rykov said, that after rest days, such as Sundays, between 20 and 30 per cent. of the men failed to return to work. And special investigation had shown that in one coal-mining region one-third of the miners were malingering and drawing Social Insurance contributions. The total amount paid for Social Insurance this year had been 600,000,000 roubles. The number of accidents in the factories was extraordinarily high and increased year by year; according to the Social Insurance statistics there were 49·4 accidents per 1,000 workers in the first nine months of 1925.

M. Rykov laments that the workers do not regard the factories and machinery as their own property, and that they are indifferent to the welfare of socialistic enterprise. But how could he possibly expect them to behave otherwise? The level of wages falls far short of that of output; the worker increases the volume of socialistic production, but his share does not show a corresponding increase. Worse still,

the payment of this share is frequently delayed ; many state industries are millions of roubles in arrears with their wages. Can anything good be said of state enterprises which are kept going on credits exacted from their own employés ? If this is Socialism, then is it surprising that the workers are not too enthusiastic about it ? They have little prospect of improving their lot in life. The most that they can hope for is that somehow they will be able to escape from a socialised occupation and become well-to-do private merchants.

Inefficiency extends throughout the whole structure of Soviet industry. The factories are equipped with worn-out machinery ; hardly any capital is available for reconstruction, and the most that can be done is to hold on until better times come. The bureaucracy which manages the enterprises is corrupt, and the workers have no interest in their jobs. As a consequence of all these difficulties the cost of production is exorbitant.

The socialised industry, it should be explained, finds a market for its products mainly amongst the peasants. Only 15 per cent. of the population at the outside lives in urban centres. The town demand is therefore limited ; besides which, much of it is unhealthy for the reason that it is created as the result of the extravagant expenditure of state money. The measure of industrial progress is therefore almost wholly determined by the extent of the peasants' purchasing power. As these peasants are to be numbered in millions, an unlimited demand exists in the country for manufactured goods, but owing to excessive cost of production, Soviet industry is quite incapable of satisfying this demand.

The nationalisation of industry in conjunction with the monopoly of import and export trade enables the Government to exploit the population, and particularly the peasantry. Coal, oil and various raw materials produced by the workers and peasants have been sold abroad at a loss which has been recouped from the high prices which the Government has required these workers and peasants to pay for imported goods. Thus the public is completely at the mercy of the bureaucracy which controls the Trust of Trusts, known as the State,



The peasants in particular are squeezed. The Government sends its agents into the country to purchase grain for export purposes. These agents compete not only with private merchants but one with another.

Extraordinary scenes are witnessed; the countryside becomes an African jungle. Sometimes the rival buyers indulge in free fights; and no trick is too despicable for them to practise, so long as it induces the peasant to part with his grain.

On occasions the agents intercept the peasants on their way to market; and not infrequently obstacles are placed upon the road, or it is dug up in order to impede or prevent the passage of the grain carts.

And when the peasant reaches the market he is offered one rouble ten kopecks, or one rouble twenty kopecks per pood for his wheat. This is a substantial advance on the usual pre-war prices of 90 kopecks.

But when the peasant goes to the shop to purchase some articles manufactured by state industry, he finds that the purchasing power of the rouble has diminished to 33 kopecks. In other words, whereas in pre-war days the price which he received for a pood of wheat would purchase seven or eight arshines of cotton print from which a shirt or a dress could be made, the price which he gets to-day will only purchase for him one arshine.

In 1924 M. Kamenev remarked: "We must demonstrate to the peasants that the foreign trade monopoly is the greatest firm in the world, and that it can dictate its prices on the foreign market." But in reality the Socialist State (with its foreign trade monopoly) presents itself to the peasants, who compose 85 per cent. of the population, as a merchant who endeavours to buy from them at low prices, and to sell to them at exorbitant prices. And yet "Down with exploitation!" is the motto of this State.

According to *Economic Life*, which is an official Bolshevik publication, in the four chief grain regions, in July of this year (1926), the price which a peasant received for a pood of grain purchased only one-third of the quantity of manufactured goods purchasable by the price of a pood of grain in pre-war days.

Or, as one critic said : A moujik sold three loads of grain to the State. But when he went to the shop to buy manufactured goods it appeared that he had sold not three loads but only one. Where did the other two loads go ?

The answer is, that they were swallowed by the bureaucratic apparatus of Communism. In 1922-3 the peasants received only 20 per cent. of the export price of corn instead of 80 per cent., which was their share under the capitalist *régime*. The rest was absorbed in overhead charges and profits ; the last item was 53 per cent. In 1923-4 the peasants secured a larger share of the export price : 73·3 per cent. instead of 20·5 per cent. But the overhead charges went up from 26·5 per cent. to 41·3 per cent., and the State finally suffered losses. In the autumn of 1925 overhead charges decreased 35 per cent. but the buying price only increased 7 per cent. The difference was represented by the profit exacted by the State : 8·6 per cent.

From these figures it is plain to see that the peasants are shamefully exploited. The purchasing capacity of the money which they receive for their grain is a third less than that of the money which was paid to them in pre-war days, and yet when the State sells this grain on the foreign market, heavy losses are invariably incurred.

Is it any wonder that the peasants are reluctant to dispose of grain in return for money, the purchasing power of which is so low ? It is not that they have little need of manufactured goods ; the demand far exceeds the supply. The peasants cry out for everything : articles of luxury as well as articles of use, for the Revolution brought them into close contact with the town, where the standard of life is higher than it is in the country. But Soviet industry cannot even satisfy their demand for the most simple articles : as, for example, nails, buttons and bootlaces.

" In 1925," said M. Rykov, " the demand of the peasantry for manufactured goods increased to the extent of one milliard roubles. But Soviet industry could not satisfy this demand. The population had money to spend, but the state industry could not produce a sufficiency of goods. It is estimated that next year the volume of industrial production will increase 15 per cent., but this increase

will not be sufficient to overcome the goods famine. An increased production of 15 per cent. presupposes an enormous expenditure on reconstruction. The money for this purpose can only come from the savings of the people or from the proceeds of severe economy."

This failure of socialised industry to satisfy the demands of the peasants for manufactured goods is the root of all the economic ills which afflict the Soviet State. The foundation upon which this State is built is the monopoly of foreign trade. The whole purpose of this monopoly is that the Government shall balance imports against exports and have something in hand wherewith to finance industrial expansion and propaganda abroad. Exports are largely composed of cereals and raw materials, which are produced by the rural population. If the Government cannot induce the peasants to part with grain in sufficient quantities, and if, owing to exorbitant overhead and other bureaucratic charges, they cannot dispose of grain at world-market prices, then their economic plans collapse. Before the war Russia exported grain to the value of 700 million roubles; in 1923-4, under the Soviet *régime* her grain exports were valued at only 192 million roubles; and in 1924-5 they had dropped to a value of 52½ million roubles. To-day the whole of Russia's exports do not equal the value of her pre-war exports of grain.

In 1924-5, when grain exports fell so low, foreign trade showed an adverse balance of 153 million roubles. It was much to the credit of the Soviet Government that in this unfortunate year they were able to find other sources of export (mainly raw materials) to take the place of the cereals which were not forthcoming. Exports, in fact, increased by 8 per cent. on the previous year, but, on the other hand, imports exceeded those of 1923-4 by 64 per cent. In 1925-6 there was an adverse trade balance of 86 million roubles, and a budget deficit estimated by Soviet economists at sums varying between 120 and 230 million roubles. Even with powers so despotic in their hands, the Soviet bureaucrats apparently cannot ensure that exports shall exceed imports. The explanation of their failure is simple; the last word on the subject rests with the peasant.

Having completed a general review of the Russian economic situation, let us put the concrete question : Does Soviet industry pay a profit ? According to the Bolsheviks it does. Here it must be pointed out that Bolshevik statistics are not to be relied upon. That is a conclusion which has been reached by every serious student of Soviet economics. In saying this, I do not suggest that official figures in regard to broad economic development are altogether truthless ; but when details are examined very serious errors are frequently discoverable.

In 1923-4 the profit from Soviet trade and industry was returned at 160 million roubles (£16,000,000), in 1924-5 at 375 million roubles (£37,500,000), in 1925-6 at 474 million roubles (£47,400,000) by one official estimate and at 600 million roubles (£60,000,000) by another.

The sums mentioned must not be regarded as pure profit ; for they were exceeded by grants and subsidies included in the budgets for various objects associated with industry.

We find the actual balance sheet of nationalisation if we consult some official statistics presented to the Communist Conference in October, 1926. According to these statistics, the expenditure of the State on industry during the last three years amounted to 1300·5 million roubles. The total sum received back from state industry and credited to budgets was 567·3 million roubles. Thus the amount actually taken from the revenue of the State for the purpose of industry was 733·2 million roubles.

In the yearly profits, to which allusion has been made, no account is taken of railways. According to the Budget for 1925-6, the railways were to yield a profit of 50 million roubles.

But, as has been already mentioned, the railways are in a deplorable condition, and a colossal sum is required for their reconstruction. The goods traffic handled in 1924-5 was only 47 per cent. of the pre-war total ; while the number of passengers showed a substantial decrease.

Many of the socialised industries and co-operative organisations are heavily indebted to the banks ; some of the latter owe as much as two to three hundred times more than



the amount of their original capital. If the expansion of credit corresponded to the expansion of production, all would be well, but it does not.

Here it should be explained that in theory all credit is state controlled. The important banks belong to the State, and are frequently called upon to finance state trade organisations which are not paying their way. The amount of credit to be issued is estimated beforehand by Government departments, and in reaching decisions these departments are frequently guided by political rather than by economic considerations. The State Bank is the principal medium for the circulation of credit. It gives credit direct to industry itself, and also to other banks which in turn also finance industry.

The demand for credit is insatiable. The State Bank can satisfy no more than half the demands made upon it for advances and discounts; these operations are only partly covered by issues of bank notes, which have to be supplemented by foreign currency and withdrawals from the gold reserve.

When the monetary reforms which led to the stabilisation of the currency were introduced, the State Bank was authorised by a decree of the Council of Commissars to issue notes, the unit of which was known as the chervonetz, equal in value to ten gold roubles (£1). To explain this monetary reform in detail would require much space; it was certainly one of the most remarkable achievements of Soviet economy.

It is stipulated by law that not less than 25 per cent. of the notes circulated by the State Bank must be covered by gold and stable foreign currencies, as, for example, the pound and the dollar.

The balance must be secured by short-term bills and securities; of the former a considerable portion is represented by overdue unredeemed bills of state trusts, which have incurred serious losses in trading. The intention was that the note issue should expand strictly in accordance with the growth of industry. This intention has not been fulfilled.

Between October 1923 and April 1926 the discounts and loans of the State Bank increased fourfold, while during

the same period those of five important banks doubled. By the end of 1925 the money in circulation reached 1,286 million roubles, an increase of 80 per cent. during the year, whilst industrial production increased only by 59 per cent. and the turnover of the trusts by 40 per cent. Credits had been scattered freely for the expansion of state trade and industry; but these credits neither conformed to the accumulation of capital nor to the flow of private savings into the banks. And so inflation—that economic nightmare which it had been thought had vanished for ever with Militant Communism—once more returned.

Increase of production was accompanied by increase of wages. There was an increase also in the number of workers employed, but this increase was represented by workers who had but little, if any, skill. At the same time the technical improvements effected in the means of production were insignificant. Consequently, although the money in circulation increased, Soviet economy proved incapable of bringing forth a corresponding expansion of production. And so inflation with all its attendant evils came back again: rising prices, depreciation of real earnings, curtailment of production plans, and growth of unemployment. "We have," said the official journal, *Economic Life*, "over-estimated our financial possibilities and our financial resources. We were prompted to do this by a desire to bring about the quickest possible development of our industries. As a consequence, our monetary system has begun to suffer. It is only after this system is cured that we shall be able to further the development of our economic life."

The Budget is now balanced without resort to currency emission. This notable achievement is partly due to the restoration of the Government vodka monopoly, which has led to a great increase of drunkenness and hooliganism throughout the country. Prohibition was originally one of the strong points of Soviet policy. After the Bolsheviks had been in power for some time Trotsky wrote of the vodka monopoly of the old *régime* in these scathing terms: "Vodka and the Church were used by the Tsar's Government to enslave the working class. . . . It was only after the conquest of power by the working class that the fighting of

alcoholism by educational measures and by prohibition received its due historic significance. . . . The abolition of the system by which the country encouraged people to drink is one of the assets of the Revolution."

In the light of these words the revival of the vodka monopoly can only be regarded as evidence of the economic plight of the Soviet Government.

Before leaving the question of the Budget one significant fact may be noted: if all the temporary incomings against which stand larger commitments are eliminated, it will be found that taxation represents 76 per cent. and indirect taxation half of the revenue. Thus the resources of the Soviet State are largely derived from the indirect taxation of the masses of the population, not from socialistic economy.

To balance the Budget without recourse to inflation is commendable. But something more is required. Despite the theoretical economic independence of the Soviet enterprises, it must not be forgotten they are part of a socialised system, and that such losses as they may incur fall ultimately upon the State. It is, therefore, essential for the security of the State itself that they should be expanded and placed upon a firm basis as soon as possible. Hitherto, as I have said, they have existed mainly upon resources accumulated by the former *régime* of capitalism, but their production has been wholly insufficient to satisfy the needs of the population.

Henceforth the problem has to be faced of creating new basic capital. And where is the necessary money for that purpose to be found?

Here we must return to the question of the rivalry between state capital and private capital which is the essence of the New Economic Policy. The Bolsheviks, as I remarked before, are proud of the fact that two-thirds of the means of production have been socialised. They point out, moreover, that in 1924-5 the output of the larger industries owned by the State increased much more rapidly than that of the smaller industries in the hands of private persons. This fact is not exceptional; for even in capitalist countries the production of larger industries grows faster than that of smaller industries; and in Russia, where private industries

are harried by the State, it is not surprising that their progress should be retarded. As far as production is concerned, it is evident that private industry (outside *kustari* and agriculture) has not the slightest chance of competing with state industries. When we come to trade a different story has to be told. I have already mentioned that in 1923 private trade monopolised more than 83 per cent. of the turnover of retail trade, whilst that of the wholesale trade, the state and co-operative organisations between them accounted for 85 per cent. At that time the number of privately owned shops was 430,000, whilst the state and co-operative societies only possessed 40,000 shops. In the villages hardly any state shops were to be found.

In the days of Militant Communism all shops were closed; two years after the inauguration of the New Economic Policy the number of shops established represented half the total that existed in Russia of pre-revolutionary times, a circumstance which showed how speedily trade revived once repression was relaxed. Nearly all the old traders had vanished, under the pressure of circumstances; but new men at once appeared to take their places. Of the 121,833 private traders in Russia in 1923, 61 per cent. had never engaged in trade before the Revolution. And of the managers of state trusts and co-operatives, 71 per cent. were strangers to trade. The fact that state trade and industry is largely in the hands of inexperienced men accounts to a large extent for the inefficiency with which it is conducted.

In the sphere of distribution state enterprise had proved to be a complete failure. The realisation of this fact alarmed the Bolshevik leaders. Supremacy over private enterprise in the control of the means of production was not sufficient for their socialistic purposes. It was essential that predominance should also be secured over the distributive trade. For if the commodities produced by state industries fell largely into the hands of private traders, they would be able to charge high prices and amass wealth; and an accumulation of private capital on a considerable scale would be a menace to the existence of the socialist system.

Hence the State decided to wage war with increased



energy upon private enterprise. No longer was it a question of economic rivalry between two systems, socialism and capitalism, such as the New Economic Policy had envisaged; the State made relentless use of its powers to crush its competitor. Thousands of shops were summarily closed, and in numerous instances the proprietors were arrested and exiled; many shopkeepers were taxed out of business; wholesale supplies to private traders were restricted; and such supplies as were given to them were priced exorbitantly and were frequently of inferior quality. But although private trade was much reduced it continued to exist. Contraband goods were smuggled across the frontier in vast quantities. Traders, moreover, placed friends in the state trusts, and these friends furnished them with an abundance of goods. Another ruse to which the private traders resorted was the purchase of retail commodities in small lots. Even then they were able to undersell the state shops.

The Bolsheviks wanted capital but not capitalists; soon they discovered that they could not secure the one without the other. And so in 1925 they invited private traders to a conference, and solemnly promised that all administrative measures against them should cease, and that they should henceforth be accorded "almost equal" privileges with the state trade organisations. At the same time they flatly refused to do away with political discriminations against merchants as a class.

Yet despite the promises of better treatment, the deliberate persecution of the private trader continued. In many instances taxation and rent exacted by the State absorbed all the profits of shopkeepers. In some towns shopkeepers were asked to contribute to various revolutionary movements, and to subscribe to Communist journals. If they refused their shops were immediately closed. In numerous places the Soviets arbitrarily imposed taxation in amounts sufficient to meet expenditure without any regard to the limitations of the law. When complaints were made of illegal impositions, taxes were at once raised.

Sometimes shopkeepers were turned out of favourably situated premises to make room for state and co-operative undertakings. Frequently private shops were prohibited

from opening on market-days in order that they should not compete with state trading organisations. In one instance cited before the Communist Conference a co-operative society reduced its prices so low that all private shops in the town had to close their doors. The society, however, became insolvent as a result of its enterprise and approached the State for urgent financial assistance. At one time the late M. Dzerzhinsky said: "Because of our treatment of the private trader the co-operatives have become the monopoly exploiters of the population."

The grain trade (and the industries associated with it) occupies first place in the economy of Russia. Here the State, as the monopolist of foreign commerce, is keenly interested in competing with the private merchant.

Already I have described the amazing scenes that frequently occur when the official agents set out to purchase grain from the peasants. These agents have all the resources of the State at their backs. Yet they are constantly outwitted by the private merchants. The latter offer higher prices, and are altogether more enterprising than the Soviet representatives. Frequently, the State has been compelled to purchase supplies of grain from its hated rivals, the private traders. And private traders, disguised as labourers, have been attached to state buying organisations, and permitted to act as middlemen.

*Economic Life* of Oct. 2, 1926, mentioned that out of 100 enterprises trading in the village market with grain, flour, forage and seeds, 86 were private, 9.5 co-operative and 4.5 state. The same journal added that of bakeries 91.6 were private undertakings. Thus private and not State enterprise supplies the Russian people with bread.

Every possible device that the official mind is capable of inventing is employed to crush private traders. Yet somehow private traders manage to elude the obstacles which are laid in their paths.

Instances have occurred where, in order to take illegal advantage of the privileges accorded to communal enterprises they joined co-operative societies. Subsequently they became managers of these societies and paid salaries to the members who worked in their interests.

Often higher railway rates are required from the private traders than from state organisations. Occasionally railway transit is denied altogether to private traders, or they are told that state enterprises have booked up all available trucks for a long while ahead, and that they must take their chance of finding accommodation for their consignments. To overcome the latter discrimination, private traders have been known to put their grain into warehouses adjacent to the railway, and thus take advantage of a regulation which says that all grain so stored must be given preference in transit. Sometimes large quantities of flour were sent as ordinary luggage, and despite the high railway rates which had been paid on them, were profitably sold on reaching their destination.

When railway transit has been unobtainable, private traders have made use of water communication. Not long ago a sensation was created in Leningrad by the arrival from Odessa of two state ships, one named *Karl Marx*, the other *Rosa Luxemburg*, laden with flour belonging to private traders. In order to voyage from the south to the north of Russia, these ships had passed through four seas, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. Despite the enormous freightage rates which had to be paid, the cargoes of flour were sold at a substantial profit in Leningrad, and the Bolshevik newspaper, published in that city, whilst deploring that state ships should have been carriers for private enterprise, had to admit that the consignments were welcome, and that had it not been for these consignments, the ships would have voyaged empty.

The Government has no settled policy in relation to private capital. When it is believed that private capital has accumulated to a serious extent, repressive measures are taken against its possessors. At once the lack of capital is felt, and repressive measures are relaxed. In 1926 an animated discussion took place amongst Soviet economists as to whether or not private capital played a considerable rôle in trade. It was then estimated that private trade possessed not less than 400,000,000 roubles (£40,000,000). This sum is much

less than the amount of capital that was in circulation in pre-war days, but in the present impoverished state of Soviet Russia it is sufficient to be of importance in the scheme of national economy. While this discussion concerning private trade was taking place, the striking revelation was made that 46 per cent. of the production of the most important branches of state industry reached the market through the medium of private trade. This announcement caused a sensation, and at once there was an outcry for renewed rigour in the repression of private enterprise.

Thus the Bolsheviks themselves are in disagreement as to which is winning: state enterprise or private enterprise. Precise figures on the point are difficult to obtain; for private enterprise, oppressed by the State, has resorted to endless subterfuges in order to find outlets. Human beings have to live somehow, and those who cannot get subsistence from the State are determined to overcome all legal obstacles to their survival. Thus individualism is making a desperate struggle for its existence against the forces of socialism. The fact that it has been driven into subterranean channels makes it none the less formidable.

As has been already shown in the sphere of industrial production, mainly as a consequence of the large number of individual handicraftsmen, private enterprise is considerable. In regard to agricultural production it is supreme. But in the sphere of trade private enterprise appears to be beaten. In 1924-5 the general turnover of trade was 21.3 milliard roubles; of that private trade represented only 24.9 per cent.—an increase of only 4 per cent. on the preceding year. But the rôle of private trade does not end here. We must not forget that 46 per cent. of the whole-sale goods which were sold during 1924-5 by state trading and co-operative organisations passed through the hands of private merchants. The value of manufactured articles acquired by the population in that year was two milliard roubles, and of this sum 1.1 milliard roubles represented the share of state trade, while the remainder was handled by private trade. Finally, we have to bear in mind the large trade in contraband goods, all of which is the consequence of "private" enterprise.



In 1926 the Supreme Economic Council appointed an expert commission for the purpose of devising means for the utilisation of private capital, having regard to the fact that Russia is a socialist state. The State is anxious to reap all possible advantage from the employment of private capital, while at the same time avoiding injury to itself. How to establish a harmonious working management of a purely temporary character between two fundamentally conflicting interests—this is the hopeless dilemma from which the Bolsheviks are striving to escape.

M. Guinsburg, the President of the Commission, which was appointed to solve the insoluble, came to the conclusion that private capital had become "an undoubted force." From whence this capital had come he could not say. "It is the consequence of some process that has accumulated in the depths of our economics," he concluded enigmatically. In plain language private enterprise driven underground had yet been able to mobilise considerable strength.

In addition to the sphere of trade, private capital is also increasing its activity in the money market. Frequently it operates in an illegal manner and exacts fantastic rates of interest.

Private capital in use largely represents the gains of the new merchant class. The workers and peasants are not over-willing to place their savings at the disposal of the workers' and peasants' state. The latest figures show that these savings amount to only 6 per cent. of the total deposits by the corresponding class in the community in pre-war days. And the contribution of the peasants is only 2.4 per cent., compared with 28 per cent. in January 1916. The peasants are hoarding money, and the workers have hardly any margin left for saving. M. Bruckhanov, the Commissar of Finance, said recently: "The State needs the savings of the people for working capital, but these savings can only be attracted by creating an atmosphere of confidence amongst the workers and peasants." How strange that amongst proletarians there should be a lack of confidence in the proletarian state!

The amount of foreign capital circulating in Soviet

Russia is negligible. Concessions for the exploitation of minerals or for trade are given under stringent conditions. For this purpose mixed companies are formed. A mixed company is an undertaking in which foreigners usually hold 49 per cent. and the Russian Government 51 per cent. of the shares. It is customary for the foreigners to subscribe 75 per cent. of the capital and the Government only 25 per cent.; that is in the proportion of three-quarters to one—but the Government's share is only paid from profits, and is not forthcoming until such are available. In addition, the company has to open very large credits, which often must be in excess of capital. Unless these are forthcoming there can be no trade; in other words, commodities cannot be produced for export unless money is advanced from the foreign side for that purpose.

Up to the beginning of October 1925, of the 110 concessions granted to foreigners, 22 had lapsed. The capital invested in these concessions amounted to only 25 million roubles; and the annual profit derived by the State from their exploitation to no more than £600,000.

Here it must be admitted that the policy of the Government in regard to concessions has the sanction of public opinion; it is also true that a large section of non-communist opinion upholds the foreign trade monopoly. If foreign capital were freely admitted in the present impoverished condition of the country, irreparable injury would be inflicted upon the national interests. Russians say quite frankly: "We don't want to become a European colony." The firm resistance of the Bolsheviks to the temptation of foreign capital is one of the chief reasons why they maintain themselves in power; on this question they are pursuing a policy that is essentially national.

But, as I have all along insisted, capital must be found from somewhere. And not a little but a vast amount of capital; the Bolsheviks themselves speak of the need of £200,000,000 to expand industry, and of an equal sum for communal or municipal purposes, for the constructing of new and the repair of old systems of tramways, gas, water and electric light.

The proletarian dictatorship is founded upon the pre-

supposition of a union between workers and peasants in which the former take the lead. But how is any union possible so long as the workers are occupied in industries which manufacture goods in insufficient quantities and at prices which the peasants cannot afford to pay, and so long as the peasants hoard grain and thus defeat the export plans of the State while at the same time menacing the towns with food shortage?

It is clear that industrial production must be increased and its cost lowered. This involves in the first place a drastic reduction of the bureaucracy. From the moment when the Bolsheviks seized power a gigantic bureaucracy made its appearance. All the Soviet leaders, beginning with Lenin himself, have in turn struggled against this bureaucracy, but with little result. Of late a determined effort has been made to reduce its size. For the first time a number of Communists have been dismissed from posts; and, curious to relate, amongst these Communists were large numbers of Jews. Anti-semitic feeling has again revived to an alarming degree in Russia, and the air is full of rumours of impending pogroms.

This revival of hostility towards the Jews is a sinister manifestation; but nevertheless it is evidence of the reassertion of the national spirit. Many Russian Communists now say: "Our party is a national party; there is no place in it for Jews."

I have merely alluded to the Jewish question because of its association with the problem of bureaucracy, which is one of the main causes of the insolvency of the Soviet system. It will be interesting to see whether the rulers of Russia are strong enough to conquer the bureaucracy, or whether the bureaucracy will conquer them and so bring about the downfall of both. To imagine Bolshevism with a limited bureaucracy is almost impossible; for how are Bolsheviks to live if not as bureaucrats?

It is difficult to see how industry can wait for the issue of the struggle with the bureaucracy. It has almost reached the pinnacle of production with its present mechanical possibilities. If it is not to fall into decline, re-equipment must be undertaken without delay. The official *Pravda*

recently published some statistics which showed that many hours are lost at various factories because of the breakdown of old machinery and the delays in the delivery of raw materials and fuel. The point has now been reached when the repair of old machinery involves more money than would be required to purchase new machinery.

At one time Lenin was willing to lease the Baku and Grozny oil-fields to foreign capitalists in order to secure financial assistance. And in 1924 M. Sokolnikov, then Commissar of Finance, said that Soviet Russia was ready to offer part of her gold reserve and the Crown jewels as security for a foreign loan. Since that time the gold reserve has considerably diminished; other pledges must now be found. The best pledge of all would be a satisfactory settlement of the question of foreign debts; but owing to the poverty of the population the Government is anxious to avoid committing itself to heavy obligations. Yet a way out of the dilemma must be found.

Some of the Bolshevik leaders are convinced that if the country can struggle along for five years it will make itself altogether independent of foreign capital. That point of view presupposes that life meanwhile would continue on a very low level, and that the population would remain content with a squalid existence. It is based upon various considerations: the proverbial patience of the Russian masses in face of suffering; the cheapness of human life in Russia; the inability of the peasants, owing to lack of education and means of communication, to organise effective resistance to the present *régime*; the knowledge that the population is anxious to avoid a return of the Imperial *régime* and to resist all attempts of foreign capitalists to obtain a serious footing in Russia.

On the other side many factors have to be considered; in the first place, the imperative need for industrial expansion. Up to the present the economic superiority of capitalist states lies in the fact that they produce goods cheaper and of better quality than Socialism. Trotsky admits this fact and adds: "We know the fundamental law of history—in the end the *régime* will conquer which ensures human society a higher economic standard." At



present there can be no doubt as to which *régime* is conquering; the national income of Soviet Russia for 1923-4 only averaged 100 roubles per head; that of the United States, for example, 1,000 roubles per head. In quoting these relative figures Trotsky urges that the task before Soviet industry is to produce cheaper and better than the industries of capitalist countries; otherwise all is lost. If Soviet industry cannot prove its superiority, then capitalist goods will somehow contrive to enter Russia and break the state monopoly of foreign trade, in which event a death-blow will be administered to the socialistic experiment.

Considered in a superficial light, Russia possesses many advantages in this struggle. She has got rid of foreign debt, and her internal debt is small, and is largely made up of money appropriated from the reserve funds of the state trusts. Her enterprises are not called upon to pay large salaries to directors, or dividends to "the idle classes." But up to the present all these gains have been cancelled by losses; the repudiation of debt has deprived the State of foreign credit; in place of directors and shareholders a new "idle" class has appeared—the class of bureaucrats, who manage the state businesses so badly that little profit is made, and who devour capital much as a hungry man does food.

Can the Bolsheviks repair these defects or are they inherent in the system? When they set out on their adventure they believed that capitalism was on its last legs and that a world revolution was imminent. Many of them still think that the capitalist system is everywhere rocking, and that, whereas it is bound to suffer decline, Soviet Russia will have time to repair the defects of Socialism and advance to victory. All the while, however, they are tortured by doubt—the doubt that capitalism may recover, that, in the words of Trotsky, "it may discover a new dynamic equilibrium not only for its unstable government combinations, but for its productive forces."

"In that event," continued Trotsky, "the Socialist State (Russia), though preparing to change and already changing from a slow goods train to a faster passenger train, would

have to catch up the express." The position of Russia, isolated in a prosperous capitalist world, would then become desperate if it is not desperate now.

The bitter struggle that is taking place in the Communist Party is the result of economic perplexity. This economic perplexity arises in turn from an inevitable conflict between life and theory. Despite all attempts to persuade the world to the contrary, it is a fact that the Party is torn with dissension.

The Opposition is composed of heterogeneous groups. On the extreme right there are men who advocate the denationalisation of some industries and the setting up of democratic government: whilst on the extreme left there are others who, alarmed at the growth of private capital, favour increased state control. Of the latter it is said that if their programme were carried out it would mean the abandonment of the New Economic Policy and a revival of Militant Communism. The memories of sufferings endured during the period of Militant Communism are too recent for anyone, save a few extremists, to desire a return to those days.

Trotsky and Zinoviev, who were regarded as leaders of the Opposition, associated with the members of both extreme groups, many of whom had been expelled from the Party. While careful not wholly to endorse the views of either, they took something from each. In the first place, they urged that democracy within the Party should be made a reality. But they have not so far suggested that democracy shall be introduced as a system of government for Russia. Their opponents insist that once there is democracy in the Party, democracy in the Government will soon follow.

Then, while demanding freedom of expression in the Party, the Opposition advocated that a more rigorous control should be exercised over elections, particularly in the rural areas, with a view to excluding bourgeois elements from the exercise of the franchise. What the Opposition professed mainly to be concerned about was that the town proletariat should dominate the peasants. With this idea

firmly fixed in their minds, they argued that the Government was favouring the well-to-do peasants, that industrialisation was not proceeding at a sufficiently quick pace, and that the wages of the workers, particularly those in lower-grade occupations, were inadequate. They insisted that capital for industrial development could be accumulated in Russia, and urged that, with this end in view, the taxation of the well-to-do peasants and private traders should be increased and the prices of industrial products raised. In a land where production was already insufficient and prices were exorbitant, the carrying out of the Opposition policy would only have aggravated matters. Trotsky and his associates were not unmindful of this danger; for at the same time they suggested that, as a compensating measure, private enterprise should be allowed more freedom. The whole basis of their policy was the belief that the well-to-do peasants had become too powerful and that the town proletariat realised and resented this fact. They sought therefore to cripple the former and to favour the latter; to assert the domination of the town over the country, while yet maintaining a link between the industrial proletariat and the poor elements in the village, thus preserving the foundation of the Revolution. The answer of Stalin and his supporters was, that if carried into effect, the programme of the Opposition would destroy all hope of unity between town and country, and finally wreck the Revolution. The restlessness of the peasants had alarmed them. First they gave economic concessions to the village: the hiring of land and labour was permitted. Political concessions were granted also; but they were quickly withdrawn once it was seen that the well-to-do peasants had invaded the Soviets. In this respect Stalin carried out the wishes of his opponents.

But the economic concessions remained in force. As a consequence the well-to-do peasant gained considerably, but the poor man also benefited inasmuch as he could find employment, whereas before he could with difficulty find bread. In this way Stalin placated the peasants and deluded himself into the belief that he had preserved unity between the proletariat and the peasantry. But the

settlement represented a distinct set-back for the Revolution, inasmuch as it enabled the rich to become richer and strengthened private enterprise. It can only prove to be of a temporary character, for it is inconceivable that political expression can for long be denied the well-to-do peasants who dominate the economic life of the village. Whichever way the Revolution faces, it finds itself in a dilemma: if it adheres to Stalin's policy and favours the peasants, the proletariat will be aggrieved; if it follows the Opposition, the peasants will become jealous of the proletariat. Thus it is impossible to achieve that unity between town and country which is the fundamental condition of the survival of the Revolution.

In October (1926) there was a trial of strength between the Opposition and the Dictatorship. The Opposition leaders visited various factories and addressed meetings of Communist workers. Much strong language was used, and wild scenes were witnessed. The Government on its side was not inactive. Many of the Opposition supporters were expelled from the Party, and some of them were arrested and exiled. Ultimately it was announced that a compromise had been reached. Trotsky, Zinoviev, Sokolnikov and other leaders formally dissociated themselves from the extreme groups and promised henceforth to submit to the decisions of the Party. While expressing the hope that democracy would be introduced within the Party, they denied that they had any desire to form groups or fractions, and called upon their supporters to cease all hostility to the Government.

This surrender was, no doubt, made at the pistol point. Stalin had formerly asserted that he was ready to resort to the severest measures possible in order to preserve the unity of the Party. And he was in a position to carry out his threat; for not only was the administrative machinery of the Party under his influence, but the secret police, with all its spies and provocateurs, was controlled by him. In consequence of the exercise of terror, the real strength of the Opposition was not disclosed.

It was not the first occasion on which Trotsky had climbed down and solemnly promised to submit to party



discipline. Like all Bolsheviks, he has a flexible mind and does not believe that a promise exacted is a promise given.

He has no conventional pride. When confronted with brute force he is ready to compromise in order to gain time. He has learnt well Lenin's favourite saying: "He who laughs last laughs best."

A fact of interest is that the principal leaders of the Opposition, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek and Sokolnikov are Jews. All these old Bolsheviks have been dismissed from office and non-Jews appointed in their places. Stalin is accused of pandering to the anti-Semitic feeling of the Russian dark masses by exploiting the circumstance that his opponents are Jews.

Behind the scenes much is happening of which the Western world is unaware. Stalin and his supporters declare that Trotsky and Zinoviev do not believe that it is possible for the Russian Revolution to survive in isolation. Thus (so it is said) Trotsky has returned to views which he held in pre-revolutionary days before he became a Bolshevik, whilst Zinoviev has gone back to faint-hearted doubts which led him to desert Lenin at the critical moment of the Revolution in 1917. In 1924, M. Sokolnikov, who was then Commissar of Finance, and who latterly joined the Opposition, published an article\* in which he said that Trotsky regarded the prospects of World Revolution as hopeless, and had reached the conclusion that the Russian Revolution was doomed to perish; and at the beginning of 1926, Zinoviev wrote a pamphlet in which he expressed doubts as to the possibility of building up a socialist state in Russia without the aid of World Revolution.

In order to show how great is their anxiety for a Revolution in the West, the leaders of the Opposition have urged that propaganda abroad should be intensified and that no compromise should be made with the moderate elements of foreign labour parties. Though despair may sit in their hearts, demagogic utterances must continue to fall from their lips. They cannot withdraw from the

\* See page 176.

scene as disillusioned statesmen sometimes do in other countries: under the Soviet *régime* there is no place for retired politicians. Nor can they emigrate, for in no country would their presence be welcome. Hence they are forced to remain on the political stage, playing parts in which they do not believe and which are grotesquely out of keeping with the realities of the times.

During his last illness, Lenin had a vision that one day there would be a great struggle between Stalin and Trotsky, and that a split would occur in the Party. In a letter which he wrote just before his death he pointed out that, as Secretary of the Party, Stalin had acquired excessive power. He doubted whether Stalin would be wise enough to make right use of this power, and spoke of him as irritable, impolite and impulsive, all which defects (said Lenin) "are fatal to success in politics." His death-bed advice was that Stalin should be deprived of the Secretaryship of the Party.

The Bolshevik Revolution began as an experiment. Up to a point it would have had the sanction of Marx had he been alive; for Engels (whom the Bolsheviks honour hardly less than Marx) wrote in his introduction to the Communist Manifesto, dated London, January 21, 1882:

"The burden of the Communist Manifesto was the declaration of the inevitable disappearance of existing bourgeois property. But in Russia, along with the capitalist system which is developing with feverish haste, and of the large landed property of the bourgeoisie in course of formation, more than half of the land is the common property of the peasantry. The question is, therefore: whether the Russian peasant commune, that already degenerate form of primitive communal property in land, will pass directly into the superior form of communistic ownership of the land, or whether it must rather first follow the same process of dissolution that it has undergone in the historical development of the West.

"The only possible way to reply to that question to-day is as follows: If the Russian Revolution is the signal for a workers' revolution in the West, and if both should

be successful, then the existing communal property of Russia may serve as the starting-point for a Communist development."

Note, that in the opinion of Engels, who voiced the ideas of Marx, only *if* the Russian Revolution was the signal for a workers' revolution in the West, and if each were successful, would it be possible for the communal property of Russia to serve as the starting-point for a communal development. 'The workers' revolution in the West has not so far come; the effect of the upheaval in Russia has been to stimulate individualism amongst the peasants; and all the signs at present show that their primitive communal arrangements are following "on the lines of the historical development of the West."

Why did Marx and Engels consider that a Revolution in Russia alone could not survive? Because they maintained that a genuine workers' revolution was only possible in a country where capitalism was highly centralised, where, in other words, instead of many capitalists, there were few. Such revolution, they held, would consist in the transformation of Capitalist private property, already practically resting on socialised production, into socialised property.

In Russia, industry was in a backward state; consequently, even though, for the sake of argument, we may admit that the conditions laid down by Marx and Engels as essential for a successful Revolution are realisable in Western Europe, it cannot be pretended that they ever existed in Russia.

If, however, Russia's industrial system was not ripe for revolution, Marx and Engels had some hope that agriculture, with its primitive communal arrangements, might serve as a starting point for a world communal development. But, as we have seen, they had no hope that success could be achieved unless at the same time a successful workers' revolution occurred in a Western country. They realised that an attempt to introduce Socialism into Russia, whose population mainly consisted of primitive agriculturists, would be foredoomed without support from an advanced European country.

When month after month passed and no revolution in

the West came to the aid of Russia, Lenin did not despair, but Trotsky urged that the Russian Revolution was destined to conflict with the peasants and therefore to fail.\*

Lenin insisted that a union between peasants and workers *was* attainable. The peasants were not to be forced, but led into Socialism under the fraternal leadership of the town proletariat, whose government was to prove itself far more advantageous to them than any government composed of the bourgeoisie could possibly be.

Both leaders quoted Marxian authority for their views, but Lenin wholly ignored the assertion of Engels attached to the Communist Manifesto which I have quoted, and which plainly says that a successful revolution in Russia would be dependent upon a successful revolution in the West. Yet Lenin did not go so far as to assert that the Revolution in Russia was self-sufficient and invulnerable. In March 1922 he declared: "We have not up to the present established the basis of Socialist economics. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the forces of dying capitalism may recapture all that we have gained." Thus he modified his original opinion that state capitalism under the dictatorship of the proletariat would amount to *almost* complete Socialism.

Viewed from the strictly Marxian point of view, the Russian Revolution is an adventure which has definitely failed, for the reason that it is unsupported—that is to say, it is already a corpse.

It may be urged that Marx was not infallible, and that experience has contradicted his theories. In other words, it may be contended that the Russian Revolution is very much alive, and that its survival has become a certainty.

Let us see what the leading Bolsheviks have to say on the subject. Stalin insists that the Russian Revolution, by which he means the Socialist Revolution, is victorious, but not *finally* victorious. He is not apprehensive of danger from the economic side; therefore he considers that the Revolution is victorious. But there is always the possibility of military intervention; therefore, according to Stalin, the Revolution is not *finally* victorious.

\* See page 45.



Trotsky, Zinoviev and other members of the Opposition think differently. They perceive that the Revolution might be ended by economic collapse as well as by military intervention.

They do not think that, providing changes are introduced, economic collapse is an immediate peril. Russia, they say, can advance towards Socialism, but they do not believe that she can realise Socialism, because they do not think that her survival in isolation is economically possible, whilst, of course, the danger of military intervention is always to be feared. Because they hold these views, they are accused of lack of faith and loss of will, but in reality they are merely showing themselves true disciples of Marx. Stalin, on the other hand, has abandoned the Prophet, and has set up his own *régime* of despotism.

According to Marx, Revolution in Russia could be nothing else but an adventure. The Opposition realises that this adventure has failed, as Marx said it would fail if no simultaneous revolution in the West occurred. Stalin extricates himself from the Marxian dilemma by resorting to subtle distinctions; the adventure has succeeded, but not wholly succeeded. Meanwhile the Bolsheviks are faced with the problem of adjusting their relations with the rest of the world which orders its life on a capitalistic basis. They are driven, therefore, to pursue a policy of compromise which is against the ideals of the Party and the interests of the workers, and which these workers do not understand. In these circumstances it is difficult for the Bolsheviks any longer to support pretensions to proletarian leadership.

Thus, even when judged by Marxian doctrine, it is not surprising that all the plans of the Bolsheviks should have gone wrong. Unaided by any other country, Russia, with her primitive forms of organisation, was bound to go to pieces when she attempted so great a transformation as that which was involved in her communist experiment. Some of the leaders had hesitations; but the masses stampeded headlong into the great adventure. And yet what happened had to happen: the bad side of Bolshevism was the Russian soul at its worst; the better side of Bolshevism,

the Russian soul at its best. The result of this stormy conflict has been confusion. The Revolution set out to abolish money, individual property and all inequality of gain, but nowhere is the greed for money greater, nowhere is the struggle for a livelihood harder, nowhere inequality more marked than in Russia. Despite the oppression to which they are subjected, the private merchants form the richest class in a community, where the standard of life is very low; next come bourgeois specialists in the service of the Government; and last of all the workers and peasants, the poorest of the poor. The landowners have vanished. But in their place have appeared the well-to-do peasants, who lease though they may not own land, and hire the labour of their less fortunate fellow-men. And many of the peasants, as in the old days, still complain of insufficiency of land.

What has changed? it will be asked. . . . The workers and peasants have acquired more self-respect and have begun to think a little for themselves. Under the Imperial *régime* their lot was wretched, and as a class they were treated contemptuously. Since the Revolution the best elements amongst them realize their own backwardness, and thirst for knowledge and betterment. Ultimately this new vision must lead them to the level of the workers and peasants of Western Europe. But how hard it has been to break with the past!

If the workers as a class have found themselves, Russian nationality has become more strongly defined. For the first time for very many years large numbers of intelligent Russians feel nationality acutely. Their patriotism is now not less robust than that of the peoples of the West. In Russia, it is said: "Better no Bolsheviks, but better Bolsheviks than foreign intervention," whilst the *émigrés*, compelled to suffer bitter humiliation and hardship in all parts of the universe, have learnt to appreciate that there is no place like home.

The Red Army has evolved into a National Army, and its allegiance is to the Russian nation rather than to the Bolshevik dictatorship. And despite the continuance of the terror, a public opinion has formed, and this public

opinion, foreseeing the future, whispers : " Soviets without Communists ! " The Bolshevik Government is anxious to avoid a Thermidor. So far, not one of the prominent leaders of the Opposition has been exiled or executed.

The endless polemical strife of the politicians has little bearing on realities. Despite their differences of opinion as to whether Revolutionary Russia can survive in isolation, they at least profess agreement on one point, that the Universal Proletarian Revolution is one day bound to come. But whatever they think, or whatever their fate may be, Russians, embittered by experience, are determined to build up a strong and patriotic nation.

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